University of Alberta

Explorations of Place: A Critical Approach to Gaining a Sense of Place in Outdoor Education Training

by

Brent Cuthbertson ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of *Doctor of Philosophy*

Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation

Edmonton, Alberta

Fall, 1999

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Abstract

This dissertation explores the development of sense of place as an educational goal in the training of outdoor educators. A series of theoretical discussions are engaged to challenge the idea of sense of place as it is generally understood in the literature. An argument is made to extend the traditional notion of sense of place to include the development of a larger sense of Place that parallels the notion of Self-realisation in Naessian deep ecology.

Utilizing this concept, termed a compassionate sense of Place, a Critical social science approach was adopted in analyzing the development of attachment to natural and cultural places in a selected group of students. The students, enrolled in a program at the University of Alberta called Explorations, conceived of, planned and implemented two extended trips in natural settings. During the study phase (1994 to 1996), interviews, participant observation and critical research techniques were employed, to examine and to encourage the students to think about their own senses of place.

Post-secondary outdoor education in Alberta is examined and critiqued as a profession in its traditional attempts to provide lasting connections to nature for its participants. But it is maintained that the field has great potential for facilitating such a connection through a conscious attention to the meaning of places. An analysis is provided of the ways in which the participants conceptualized elements of place and how they, at least partially, moved toward a more compassionate sense of Place by the conclusion of the program. A conceptual model is presented as a focus for the analysis. A final discussion of the study and its merits follows the analysis. Recommendations for outdoor education as a discipline, as a profession and for further research are offered.

Acknowledgements

This project has been assisted by the diligence and insights of many. I would like to take the opportunity to thank some of the people who have made significant contributions to its completion. First and foremost, I owe a debt of gratitude to the participants of the study. The young men and women who allowed me to take up their time and who were genuinely interested in the topic deserve much of the credit for any successes within the study.

My committee members spent unselfish hours reading and providing feedback. To my supervisory members, David Whitson (advisor), Debra Shogan and Toh Swee-Hin, I am grateful. These people stretched my understanding of the relationship between people and nature into areas of thought that now guide a great deal of my own academic direction. In different ways, each of them taught me what it could mean to be an academic while retaining a sense of humility and respect for others. A rather large debt is owed to David Whitson, who kept up with the final frenetic pace of eleventh hour chapter submissions. My thanks also for the examining committee members for joining at such a late stage in the development of the thesis. The acknowledgements would not be complete without recognizing the input of those people who were important to the seminal stages of thesis development. Pat Rafferty and Chuck Chamberlin provided opportunities for me to grow through their constructive feedback. Finally, Harvey Scott, a mentor, gave me the flexibility to pursue issues that were significant to me, and actively encouraged me to explore ideas even when they were in contrast to his own.

Aside from the academic input, there have been people who have supported my efforts by reading drafts, discussing issues or taking up the slack in life that is sometimes left in completing a project such as this. Lesley Curthoys helped immeasurably with the model's

graphics and with moral support. Similarly, John Colton and Carol Fellowes Colton contributed in so many intangible ways that ultimately helped me to decide to stay in academics. My friends in the heydey of the residential requirement, John Amis and Mark Burgess, kept me from becoming too serious a student; Burge especially taught me much about the meaning of solid friendship.

My parents and family loved me enough to believe in a project that bakes no bread. Their support means the world to me. That they simply forgave my missed visits and wished me luck in writing is a sign of their support. Perhaps the person to whom I owe the greatest debt is my partner Jenn. More than anyone else, she has been able to share the pain and joys of writing this dissertation. Her own schedule and plans were often disrupted for mine, and she did so without misgivings. She occasionally had to tell me to get to work, and sometimes to stop. In the end, much of the credit for this project being completed in a year still beginning with a "1" goes to her. Sweetie, this next year is "your turn."

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Chapter One: Introduction

> The real voyage of discovery
> consists not in seeking new
> landscapes but in having
> new eyes.
> Marcel Proust

Introduction

My life experiences had apparently conspired to make it impossible for me to enjoy a deeply felt sense of place. Many of the nature writers I have respected for years (e.g., Edward Abbey and Wendell Berry) were telling me that I could not really come to know and feel a profound sense of place because my life had repeatedly torn itself loose from its familiar, local geography. I have lived in three different countries on two continents and in various cities within those larger land masses. However, I have never stayed in one place long enough to truly feel rooted. Geographical literature on place emphasizes three key elements: locale, experience and time. Each is supposed to influence our relationships to the places we live in, but I have always been limited (according to these criteria) because I have not resided in one location for any significant length.

After more than three decades of this unsettled, global existence, I was confronted by the idea that I could not truly consider myself connected to anywhere on the earth. Moreover, although I have spent a good deal of time in relatively undisturbed nature, I have been solidly identified - at least as symbolized by the addresses on personal documents such as passports and driver's licences - as an urban dweller. This is a feeling that is more than a little unsettling for someone who, in vocation and avocation, seeks a relationship with nature that is as profound as my history and circumstances will permit me to construct.

My family immigrated to Canada from central Africa shortly before my fifth birthday, living at first in Montreal and then settling into Winnipeg just over a year later. My first memories of significant contact with the Canadian "wilds" came as a child in a family trip to the Rocky Mountains. It was a car camping trip with a soft-top tent trailer and we stayed in the pull through campgrounds in the national parks. We experienced nature as one might expect of such a trip in the mid 1960's. My parents fed bears through the car window at the roadside and my brother and I fed the chipmunks at all the popular scenic vistas frequented by tourists. We took in most of the interpretive sites catering to vehicle traffic and we rode cable cars in order to see the mountains from on high. Even though I have come to prefer a different type of travel in nature, one event linked my memories of the Rockies with a very distinct feeling. I was captured by the sight of the mountains fading out the rear window of the car as we drove east back to our prairie home in Winnipeg. In my head I could "see" all of the life that I knew existed beyond the rising rock. I could not quite articulate the feeling as the mountains receded from me, and the closest I can come in reflection is that I knew then that I wasn't finished with those places. In later years, I have watched the same view in the mirror of my own vehicle trying to see the mountains as I did that day, knowing that something in those experiences of childhood told me nature and I were linked in some way.

It would not be for some years yet that I would come to know the joys and challenges of a self-propelled canoe trip on the Canadian Shield, a vastly different experience from that family vacation. What exactly it was on a weekend long trip among the islands of Lake of the Woods as an early teen that drew me into a life as an outdoor educator, I'm not sure. I couldn't honestly say that I was overwhelmed by the beauty and reverence of the place, although I have been since then. I'm not quite convinced that I even liked the trip. I was definitely personally challenged by the experience as we were cold and wet for much of the three days. However, my outdoor career may easily have ended there if my brother had not been so sure that I'd enjoyed the trip. He convinced me that I did in fact want to sign up for a two week trip later that summer with YMCA Camp Stephens.

I accepted the challenge that seemed to be presented to me by that two week canoe trip and met it with all I had. The following year I was invited to join a six week canoe trip with the camp, the longest and most demanding experience offered in the wilderness program. I continued to become more accomplished as a wilderness canoe traveller and later became a counsellor and canoe trip leader at Stephens, ultimately taking on the responsibility as the "Wilderness Program Director" for three years. Along the way I spent a good portion of my summers in the woods and on the waterways of Northwestern Ontario, Manitoba and Saskatchewan gaining proficiency as a canoeist, as a leader of young people, and acquiring an affinity for the Canadian Shield.

After leaving Winnipeg as a young man and living for a short time in Georgia, I ended up following an academic career in Edmonton. I was reintroduced to the mountains that I remembered as a child, but this time from the perspective of a canoeing and rafting guide in British Columbia, Canada's Yukon and Northwest Territories, and in

Alberta as a teaching assistant for the outdoor education program at the University of Alberta. My water based experience expanded to include backpacking, skiing, and mountaineering, knowledge that provided an opportunity to work as a field instructor for the National Outdoor Leadership School in British Columbia.

In my schooling and in my professional training, I slowly came to see the connective power of direct contact with natural places and I began to shed the desire to simply meet the challenges with which nature so readily provided me. Through all of this I developed a love for many natural places, but also a feeling that I was not living up to my potential in connecting to nature. I only went there as a visitor, still a tourist, in some ways only slightly different than the little boy who fed chipmunks in Jasper.

My feelings of separation from nature have sometimes been made more acute by the messages of those who have written about the joys of a wilderness-based sense of place. Authors like Henry David Thoreau, Aldo Leopold, John Muir, Edward Abbey, and Grey Owl have inspired me, but their words, through no conscious intent, have also caused me some distress. They were comfortable, and indeed celebratory, in their lives that existed close to a nature they knew well. It is true that I knew (and know) nature in my own way, through my travels to places of beauty and peace, but I could not know it as these people did, as I was "supposed" to. My frustration and the feelings of invalidated experience is perhaps best explained by introducing a poem of Wendell Berry's (1980, p.3):

Stay Home

I will wait here in the fields
to see how well the rain
brings on the grass.
In the labor of the fields
longer than a man's life
I am at home. Don't come with me.
You stay home too.

I will be standing in the woods
where the old trees
move only with the wind
and then with gravity.
In the stillness of the trees
I am at home. Don't come with me.
You stay home too.

There is usually more than one interpretation of artistic expression, but the pointed, poetic message I received from Berry's words - and the message is not dissimilar to other nature authors - is that home, as a rooted notion, is best situated in physical contact with nature, indeed in prolonged contact with a particular natural environment. My own sense of home, on the other hand, has always been temporary and urban. Moreover, it is likely to remain urban based, given my choice of a university dependent career. Yet the celebrated words of some nature writers (especially the classic literature of Muir, Thoreau, Emerson, Leopold and others) have become embedded in the outdoor culture. And although times have changed sufficiently to prevent people like me from emulating their lives, we still cleave to the messages, to the extent that we privilege such existences over our own. Their connections to nature have become the ideal against which those of us in the outdoor field - at least myself - have compared our own ways of life and relationships with the natural world.

At this point I could see three options. I could accept that I would never attain this sense of place written about and encouraged by so much of what I had come to know as the classic literature in nature writing. Second, I could abandon my urban identity, but for reasons too complex to be discussed here, this did not seem to be a viable option. Finally, I could challenge the wisdom of tradition and seek a way that is different, but equally satisfying in my attempts to connect with the natural world. Ultimately, I chose the third option. Finding that way is what led me to the development of this dissertation. In short, I am disputing the understanding of human/natural relationships that has been constructed by the outdoor culture's adoption of the nature writings to which I refer.

As I have argued elsewhere (Cuthbertson, Heine and Whitson, 1997), the role outdoor education and recreation play in facilitating a type of contact that is potentially deeply meaningful, yet not necessarily rooted in personal geography, is critical in the development of a sense of place that seeks to expand and strengthen the connections between self and other(s') places. My position is that gaining a sense of place as it has been traditionally understood is a worthwhile pursuit. A rooted connection to the land has the potential to be profound and life-fulfilling. Like many others, I have revelled in the writings of the same authors I mentioned above. Their inspiring messages have helped to propel myself and others in their desire to connect with nature, and indeed they have been partially credited with birthing an environmental consciousness in North American society (see Nash, 1982). I wish merely to add to the concept of place so that those of us who live primarily in urbanized areas, but who still seek a profound relationship with nature may do so without feeling it to be somehow inferior. In this study, I would like to challenge what I believe is the implication of Berry's words that a deep connection to nature is beyond the capabilities of those who lead lives like mine. In addition, and more importantly, I would like to explore how socially meaningful connections to nature can be developed and facilitated within outdoor education culture. This project is about exploring and facilitating the development of a deeply felt sense of place for those in outdoor educator training programs.

theoretical orientation[1]

In developing my orientation to the problem posed by this project, I have drawn from a number of sources. I am interested in continuing to build on an interdisciplinary approach to my own field in a way that seeks to supply theoretical links across ideas that both appeal to and challenge outdoor education. At the outset, I must recognize the unfinished quality of such a goal as it is represented in this study. I have begun to reconcile my desire to create large, coherent theory with the knowledge that such development is a lifetime's work. Metaphorically, I am collecting some theoretical threads in preparation for weaving the cloth. Deciding on the compatibilities of primary qualities is the focus here. The fabric, let alone a recognizable garment, is years away.

Nonetheless, there is some shape to the types of theories and the implications they have for each other, and it is prudent to examine the key ideas that make up my orientation. In this section, I examine the concept of place, beginning with how the term is traditionally presented in cultural geography. Second, I attempt to ground concepts of place within relevant deep ecological constructs. In so doing, I wish to create some bridges between outdoor education, a somewhat transient occupation, and the possibilities for gaining a deeply felt and positively constructed sense of place.[2]

---

[1] Headings for topical discussion are not capitalized in an effort to reduce confusion. As the reader will discover, I utilize capitals in some terms as a way of distinguishing between meanings that are used in their non-capitalized counterparts. For example, when developing the differences between place and Place later in this chapter, I attempt to be consistent with that meaning in the headings as well. To maintain consistency in all headings, then, (with the exceptions of chapter introductions and titled headings), I have chosen to use lower case throughout the dissertation.

space and place

Cultural, or humanistic, geographers have played a major role in distinguishing the concepts of space and place. Authors in this field have been largely responsible for articulating place as something more than merely objective, more than, "... a circumscribed area containing one or more specified phenomena; as a circumscribed area or spatial unit within a hierarchy of such interacting areas or units; or as a unique assemblage of interrelated physical facts and human artifacts" (Pred, 1983, p. 66). In depicting the stance of humanistic geographers with regard to place, Pred noted:

> For them, place is never really an object. It is always an object for a subject. It is seen, for each individual, as a center of meanings, intentions, or felt values; a focus of emotional or sentimental attachment; a locality of felt significance (p. 49).

---

[2] I should provide some clarification in my usage of the term "transient" here. I refer to the physical relationship that most outdoor educators have with nature. In other words, most people in the field live in urban centres (or at least built environments) and make temporary forays into more natural areas. In this way, many outdoor professionals are transient in the sense that they are only visiting those places.

The key idea in much of this literature is that physical space only begins to take on characteristics of place for human subjects when those subjects develop sentiments and affective attachments based on lived experiences of that space. Of the geographers referred to by Pred, Edward Relph is prominent. His work has had significant influence in the discussions of place and the quality of place. In Place and Placelessness Relph stated:

> Places are fusions of human and natural order and are the significant centres of our immediate experiences of the world. They are defined less by unique locations, landscape, and communities than by the focusing of experiences and intentions onto particular settings (1976, p. 141).

More than a decade later, Walter (1988), who often refers to "the experience of place," compared the significance and relationship of space and place:

> Modern "space" is universal and abstract, whereas a "place" is concrete and particular. People do not experience abstract space; they experience places. A place is seen, heard, smelled, imagined, loved, hated, feared, revered, enjoyed, or avoided. Abstract space in modern thinking means a framework of possibilities. A place is immediate, concrete, particular, bounded, finite, unique. Abstract space is repetitive and uniform. Abstraction moves away from the fullness of experience. Abstract space against concrete place contrasts abstract representation with the pulse of life feeling. The rationalization of space breaks the unity of located experience (pp. 142-143).

Relph (1976) agreed: "The catalyst that converts any physical location - any environment if you will - into place, is the process of experiencing deeply. A place is a piece of the whole environment that has been claimed by feelings." (p. 142).

In other words, place appears to be a human-constructed phenomenon, and one that is a product of values, more than of rationality and logic. It also appears to be a construct that is distinct from - though not independent of - the (objective) physical qualities of the space. At this point we are confronted by the idea that place cannot exist without the presence of the observer, specifically the human observer. In other words, from this perspective, the physical landscape, and indeed the land itself, is reduced to the status of object for a human subject, just as Pred (1983) described above. This is a common theme among geographers writing on the topic of place. For Porteous (1990), for example, landscape is not observable without the human subject. While the land itself may exist in its own right, the concept of landscape is a meeting ground between this physicality and an interpretive human consciousness (Porteous, 1990). Similarly, Tuan (1975) maintained that space is devoid of human meaning: "Space is abstract. It lacks content; it is broad, open and empty, inviting the imagination to fill it with substance and illusion" (p. 164). For Tuan, abstract space becomes "place" through human experience of that space. Relph (1976), Walter (1988) and Ryden (1993) all offer versions of the same idea. In the words of Ryden, space is "...geography viewed from a distance, cooly pondered and figured out, calmly waiting to have meaning assigned to it" (p. 37). Place, then, becomes existant when that meaning is assigned by the human subject.

Yet the idea that space is made into place (and therefore significant) through human experiences both interested and worried writers such as Relph (1976) and Meyrowitz (1985). For these authors, if we do not "make" a place valuable, our connection to landscape (and all that might entail) is jeopardized. Relph saw the uniformity of built spaces as damaging to our senses of place. For him, an unbroken sameness in cultural spaces (i.e., built areas) diminishes the likelihood of our connection to those places in meaningful ways. Relph argued that there is a trend towards the homogeneity of places, especially commercial places, that undermines our individual and collective senses of place. This placelessness, argued Relph, is created by an "overriding concern with efficiency as an end in itself" (p. 143). Under such conditions, "...places can be treated as the interchangeable, replaceable locations of things, as indeed they are by multinational corporations, powerful central governments, and uninvolved planners" (p. 143).

In a similar vein (albeit from a different disciplinary perspective), Meyrowitz (1985) argued that mass electronic media have become so influential in our everyday lives that uniqueness and distinction between individuals and localities have become severely eroded. Following the title of his book, No sense of place, Meyerowitz concluded that we (largely Western society) no longer possess a sense of place. Inherent in Meyrowitz's argument is the implication that sense of place hinges on locale, an assumed quality of place in cultural geography. The assumption that sense of place is a phenomenon best situated locally is consistent in the writing reviewed thus far, but it also extended to critiques of their work. For example, in examining Meyerowitz's No sense of place, Kirby (1988) took issue with the position that "...the singularity of place is disappearing due to media activity..." (p. 243). Kirby's main criticism of Meyrowitz centred on the idea that local structures and interactions mitigate this influence, and he argued that Meyrowitz overlooked "...that there exists a perpetual process of reproduction which is rooted in particular places, and which continually re-creates what Vico termed a *common* sense - a unity which is subtly different from that which takes place (sic) elsewhere" (p. 239). I do not wish to deal with the validity of the debate presented as it is somewhat tangential to the point I am attempting to make here. Indeed, Relph (1976), Meyrowitz (1985) and Kirby (1988) make a good deal of sense in their arguments. What I wish to point out is that at no time is it questioned that "sense of place" can exist on a level other than the local, despite the very insightful connections that many of these authors make about the interactions between local and more general social structures and forces. In short, a more global sense of place is not considered, and sense of place is depicted as a product of experience over a prolonged time. In the words of Tuan (1975), "Experience takes time. Sense of place is rarely acquired in passing. To know a place well requires long residence and deep involvement" (p. 164).

At one level, I don't wish to find fault with the sense of place literature. I believe that gaining a sense of place as it has been described by these writers is important. I wish to make it clear that I am not opposing their ideas nor their suggestions for seeking meaning in the local places we live. What concerns me is the privileging of locale and length of residence in the construction of place. As a deep ecologist, I must ask how this construction of place interacts with the principles that make up my theoretical position.

More specifically for this study, what specific implications does an outdoor education practice, steeped in deep ecological theory, have for the the characteristics of place described so far?

deep ecology and place

I find myself informed and influenced by a variety of perspectives in environmental thought, but I feel most aligned with the ideas of deep ecology as they are expressed by Arne Naess. There are a number of authors connected to deep ecology (see, for example, Kirkpatrick Sale, George Sessions, Bill Devall and David Foreman), but many do not make much room for the political and cultural connections of the human-nature relationship, and even fewer could be said to approach Naess' nuanced understanding of the apparent contradictions in deep ecology raised by competing paradigms.

For example, one insightful critique of the wilderness-based philosophies of Western deep ecological writers is provided by Guha (1993). Guha criticized what he termed the "American variant" of deep ecology, citing a lack of concern among its proponents for some of the underlying causes of environmental crises, namely overconsumption and militarism. However, even while Guha has taken other deep ecological writers to task for their focus on wilderness preservation at the expense these more "human" issues, he has taken care to excuse Naess:

> One of the major criticisms I make in this essay concerns deep ecology's lack of concern with inequalities *within* human society. In the article in which he coined

> the term *deep ecology*, Naess himself expresses concerns about inequalities between and within nations. However, his concern with social cleavages and their impact on resource utilization patterns and ecological destruction is not very visible in the later writings of deep ecologists (p. 554).

I have chosen to pursue a more Naessian perspective in my own understanding of deep ecology precisely for some of the criticisms raised by authors such as Guha (1993). In my view, the deep ecological perspective developed by Naess is more aware of, open to, and hence better negotiates, the subtleties of the human-nature debates than others of the genre.

From a deep ecological perspective, three problems become apparent when one views the preceding discussionof place and space. First, as we have seen, the notion that space becomes place as meaning is given to physical features is overwhelmingly accepted by those dealing with sense of place, and with good reason. However, this presents a problem for deep ecologists in trying to ascribe inherent value to the land itself. As Porteous (1990) implied, the land may exist, but our access to knowing the land *as it is* cannot be reliable. If we cannot know the land without our own human subjectivity accompanying that understanding, it tends to relegate the land to the status of object because of the recognition that value and meaning is given to place by us, the human subjects. Second, the apparent primacy of a localized, or rooted, sense of place appears to conflict with Naess' concept of Self-realisation, a deep ecological construct to be developed below. Third, the issue of time becomes rather significant in this discussion. I cannot deny that the longer one spends in a place, the more likely that person is to become intimately knowledgeable of that place, thus gaining a very rooted sense of place. On the other hand, outdoor educators rarely move permanently to a specific location in nature, and this has direct implications for the ability of people in the outdoors to connect as deeply as they might wish.

Self-realisation, place and Place: the local and the global

Of particular note at this juncture is Naess' development of Self-realisation, an expansion of the smaller, individual, sense of self to include all others, including other forms of life. Though Naess refuses to define it precisely, he utilizes the term to reconcile his assertion that 'all life is fundamentally one' with the obvious diversity of individual realities. In the introduction to Naess' Ecology, community and lifestyle, David Rothenberg explained the dynamic:

> Self-realisation is not self-centred. Remember the capital S, but at the same time do not think the individual self or ego is dissolved into the larger Self. The diversity of approaches remains, as we share and shape our connections to the larger (Naess, 1989, p. 9).

The similarities between Naess' Self-realisation and Buddhist traditions will be evident for some readers, and indeed the influence of the Eastern philosophy's emphasis on the interrelatedness of all things suffuses Naess' work. For Naess, altruism becomes unnecessary in striving for Self-realisation because the interests of others are also the interests of the self. However, deep ecology makes it clear that Self-realisation is not a goal that one achieves in any final or concrete sense. David Rothenberg attempted to explain some of the nuances in the terminology used by Naess:

> The word in Norwegian is *Selv-realisering*: Self-realising. It is an active condition, not a place one can reach. No one ever reaches Self-realisation, for complete Self-realisation would require the realisation of all. Just as no one in certain Buddhist traditions ever reaches nirvana, as the rest of the world must be pulled along to get there. It is only a process, a way to live one's life (Naess, 1989, p. 9).

Similarly, Hopkins (1980) explained compassion in Tibetan Buddhism as a state of mind and a state of being in which one seeks to reduce or eliminate the suffering of others. The rationale is based on seeing others as an extension of those we love through reincarnation and, in this tradition, all life has temporal interconnectedness in the context of caring for one another.[3] It is from the connectedness of individuals - either temporally as with Tibetan Buddhism or by contemporary interdependence - that both Naess and Hopkins can claim that all life is one. In this context of such strong interconnectedness with each others' lives, both compassion in the Tibetan tradition and Self-realisation invite us to act upon the world in order to bring about change, a change that is mindful of others. In my use of the words "compassion" and "compassionate" I loosely follow the Tibetan Buddhist understanding of its meaning, woven together with the call from deep ecology to expand our concept of self to include others and the place(s) of others as part of a larger Self.

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[3] Interestingly, reincarnation in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition is not an intra-species phenomenon. In other words, the relationships that we have had with those we loved in past lives may not necessarily be in human form in the present one. Such is the power of connectedness of the self to all life that Naess wishes to invoke.

In making this connection, deep ecology allows us to address the major limitation in the sense of place debate as it is exemplified by the earlier discussion of Meyrowitz (1985) and Kirby (1988). Consider this: if Self-realisation provides a directionality for my day-to-day existence, it also becomes important for me to connect as profoundly as I can with others. Likewise, if place is indeed the junction between humans and nature, it is equally important for me to attempt to understand and value the places of others. Place becomes the perfect meeting ground for a human understanding of other lives. While people should be encouraged to understand and gain a local sense of place in the way that is lauded by Berry, Relph, Meyrowitz, and Kirby, we can also benefit from connecting our understanding - and our caring - of places to a more wholistic concept. The result may indeed be a more general and profound, and less geographically specific notion of place than we have managed to construct previously.

It is this that I mean when I utilize the phrase "a compassionate sense of Place." In paralleling the Tibetan Buddhist meaning of compassion and Naess' use of Self-realisation, I see a great possibility in attending, not only to our own sense of place, but also to the places of others in a way that seeks to give and receive real meaning, that seeks to contextualize those places culturally, naturally, historically, and politically, and that engages the place in a dialogue that negotiates our own meaningful realtionship with it. Making connections among the myriad places of our experiences can lead to a sense of Place that not only parallels the relationship between self and Self, but contributes to a larger sense of Self.

time and place

Even though Tuan (1975) defended the virtues of time spent in place, it is actually he who provided an avenue for further consideration of the problem:

> If it takes time to know a place, *the passage of time itself does not guarantee a sense of place*. If experience takes time, the passage of time does not ensure experience. One person may know a place intimately after a five-year sojourn; another has lived there all his life and it is to him as unreal as the unread books on his shelf (p. 164, 1975, emphasis mine).

The key to circumventing the need to be rooted, as Tuan implies above, is to be conscientious in one's approach to place. An attentive, consciously developed sense of place that actively seeks to understand the meaning of places for oneself and for others is what is meant by Relph (1976) in his description of authentic insideness. In Relph's hierarchy, an authentic insideness is the deepest sense of place that an outsider might gain.

There are some unresolved details that set up some potential conflict here between Tuan and Relph (i.e., Tuan seemed to acknowledge that an "outsider" might actually gain a more profound sense of place than an unattentive insider, while Relph did not appear to allow for this), but the combination of these two ideas makes for a powerful possibility. A conscious attempt at developing a sense of place for the range of places visited by outdoor educators means that an attentive "outsider" may construct a sense of "places" that could then contribute to a whole. While perhaps such a sense of Place could not be considered deep in relation to any one particular locale, it may be considered deep in its relation to the larger world, a worthy goal for a deep ecological outdoor educator.

place and the relational field: the experience of place

Having dealt with the concepts of locale and time, and having established a basis for gaining a wider, less geographically specific sense of place, we are left with the first problem posed at the beginning of this section, namely how does a deep ecological position deal with the social construction of places? To what extent can the land and non-human inhabitants be valued in a concept of place that, as humanistic geographers maintain, does not exist without the human subject?

By invoking Naess' concept of a "relational field" we can connect space, place and humanity in a manner that grants significance to each while avoiding the dilemma of creating a hierarchy in favour of humanity, the acceptance of which would necessarily lead to anthropocentrism. In tackling the question of whether qualities of reality exist in nature apart from humans, Naess (1989) explored the historical development of this line of thinking. Naess presented a classification which identified and distinguished between primary, secondary and tertiary qualities. According to Naess, the primary consists of "geometric-mechanical" qualities; the secondary is made up of characteristics such as colour, warmth and taste; the tertiary level includes the more complex qualities of perception, such as those that can be described as "sorrowful, beautiful, threatening, pathetic" (p.52).

Naess proposed that this conception locates primary qualities within the physical bodies themselves, while humans are meant to create secondary and tertiary qualities by sensory and social interpretation of those primary qualities. Naess posed the question of why it is that we unproblematically accept qualities of size and shape while other qualities find ownership solely with the person who is experiencing. In Naess' words:

> It is difficult to understand why it is not also necessary to 'project' length, and all other qualities from within the human subject. If we do, we arrive at 'the thing in itself' as an x about which nothing can be said, while everything is ascribed to a subject who creates the world as it is actually experienced. A very flattering, albeit uninformative conception (p.53).

Naess proposed that we give up this notion of all qualities existing solely within the subject and attempt to reintroduce them back to nature as owner. In doing so, Naess expands on the Protagorean "both-and" theory which explores differing perceptions. By way of example, Naess discussed the experiences of two hands, one warm and one cold, in a bucket of water. To the former, the water could be considered cold while the latter would experience the water as warm. In making the statement that both are actually correct *for the water itself,* Naess holds that an object that has more than one quality for more than one person does not have to be contradictory. In this way, Naess introduced the concept of the relational field. In this field - described by Naess as "the totality of our interrelated experience" (p. 55) - material objects can be considered as junctions within the field where they may appear different to us at different times, "but they are nonetheless the same things" (p. 55).

While this may seem somewhat tangential to the discussion at hand, Naess' formulation of the relational field has direct implications for the experience of place. Applied to the theoretical development of place perception, what Naess has allowed us to do is give the land a voice in its relationship with us. Just as we see a bowl of fruit differently - in artistic terms - as we change the angle from which it is viewed, so our personal histories and cultures will give us different views of the natural world. If, as Relph (1976) suggested, places are the "fusions of human and natural order," what is important to recognize from all of this is that place is more than a set of meanings attributed to space by the people who occupy it. Rather, place is a set of meanings that are developed around a physical space, contributed to by a dynamic between and among the people, culture, and nature itself.

Gaining a sense of place, then, is partly a process of connecting to the subjectivity of landscape (with the land as subject), a subjectivity that is rich in personal meaning and contributes to the creation and maintenance of our personal and communal identities. But only in part. While a Naessian conception of place would require the land be given recognition of its role in the development of our sense of place, it would also require us to embrace the interconnectedness of land, nature and people, a relationship that is (to borrow a term from Schutz) intersubjective. Because places are socially constructed, it would be necessary that in order to gain a sense of a place, one would also need to gain a sense of the intersubjectivity of that place for those who live there and who contribute to the shared construction of understanding place.[4]

statement of purpose

Outdoor education has created remarkable opportunities for its participants to connect with nature through adherence to an experiential pedagogy. But all too often we miss real opportunities to facilitate the development of understanding the meaning of, and connection among, places. These opportunities might provide a key to outdoor participants developing an ethic of care that extends beyond the immediate adventure experience and that transcends the narrower senses of self and place. In specific terms, the purpose of this dissertation was to explore, but also to become involved in, the development of a sense of place in an outdoor education program at the university level in order to guide that development toward a compassionate sense of Place. How can we understand and move towards a sense of Place that attempts to value places as connected to a larger whole?

justification

The question of contribution remains. To what end this project? What did I hope to add to the body of knowledge in my field and what specific positive outcomes potentially existed for those who participated in the study? First, the expanded concept of Place that I have begun to develop in this chapter could well benefit any outdoor or adventure pedagogy that has "connection to natural places" as one of its objectives. An exploration by the participants of the meaning of place as it relates to their own experiences in different locales may allow them to begin weaving a conscientious understanding of the relationships among places and increase their attachment to the larger whole that is informed by Place.

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[4] As a cautionary note, however, this cannot connote ownership, even by the residents of a particular place. Anyone who visits, moves in or even studies place in a locale contributes to its dynamic construction. Places, like people, do not exist in vacuums.

Second, as I argue in the next chapter through the experience of the Explorations program at the University of Alberta, post-secondary outdoor programs in Alberta have become complacent in the practical application of outdoor education pedagogy. This type of study has the potential to help future practitioners develop an approach to their own and others' educations that seeks to make more inclusive connections to natural places.

Finally, and perhaps most directly, the nature of this critical social research (i.e., involved and facilitating for change rather than solely observational) provides the participants with opportunities during the tenure of the study to analyze their own relationships with the places in nature that are so important to their profession. In this way, my project may possibly find its most valuable contribution - helping everyone involved (including me) to become more conscious of the patchwork quilt of places that we all must try to understand and stitch together into something more meaningful than merely their individual pieces. Most of us look to create a mental picture of the world that flows together in a way that makes sense and that avoids glaring inconsistencies and oversights. I am hopeful that this project was a small step in a positive direction for each of our quests in that regard.

a look ahead

The rest of this dissertation is the result of what I have set out for myself in this chapter. In thus far articulating what seems to me to be a gap, not only in the research and accepted academic thought to date, but in my own history, I am keen to explore its dimensions and characteristics. Chapter two provides an an overview of the Explorations program and examination of the difficulties faced by some outdoor educators in their attempts to introduce people to the natural world. The field has experienced some huge successes, particularly with respect to the establishment of outdoor education as a profession and a discipline. Rising interest among people in North America for nature-based experiences and a need for educating an urban-oriented society about being in, and travelling in, free nature has helped to develop the field. However, the ways in which outdoor experiences are often operationalized is problematic when it comes to developing an inclusive sense of place. Chapter two attempts to develop a picture of how outdoor education could benefit from a closer analysis of the places (natural and cultural) we visit.

Chapter three examines the methodological issues which frame the research. It provides a personal historical context for my chosen approach to the study as well as a theoretical discussion of the issues raised in conducting critical social science research.

Finally, chapter three also introduces some of the specific events that had an impact on the anticipated method.

I did not foresee a section in the dissertation that is written along the lines of chapter four. However, a chapter devoted to the chronology of the research and a more detailed account of the significant events during the tenure of Explorations '96 (the specific program under study) proved to be necessary. The circular, thematic nature of chapter five did not ultimately provide a sense of the timeline involved in the study and a precursory chapter was needed to give some context. Chapter five, then, supplies the body of the analysis and explains the model presented at its outset.

Chapter six provides a degree of closure to the project. It discusses the validity of the analysis and the contributions that the study may have made to the body of knowledge in outdoor education. This final chapter makes recommendations for future research, but also looks inward to reflect on how the research, as it was conducted, might have been improved.

In almost all chapters, I am positioned front and centre, a somewhat egotistical stance. But, as Harper (1996) maintains, "Every intellectual work is in some sense autobiographical" (p. xvi). This one is no exception. I have a passion for the outdoor field and it is this passion, caught up in my own history and my introduction to free nature, that drives my research. Ultimately, the goal in my own intellectual work is to address the large and small questions that will not stay quiet. In confronting these questions, reflexively and with the help of others, I can only hope that any insights I may glean from the research will also help others in their desire to connect to the world.

Chapter Two: Explorations

Wilderness Explorations Guiding Practicum
A team of qualified senior outdoor route students research, plan, operate and lead a series of extended wilderness explorations that study selected Western Canadian environments and trails first hand. Emphasis is placed on an integrated, interdisciplinary approach to outdoor environmental education. Students participate extensively in group processes, environmental interpretation and trail leadership.
(University of Alberta Course Calendar, 1992/93, p. 392)

Introduction

A sense of place. It has been, is, and will continue to be, the subject of much debate and reflection. Where do I fit in? What are my connections to other people and other life forms? Who/what affects my life choices? How do my life choices affect others? If we have ever contemplated our relationships to the world in which we live and with those who share that world, we have contemplated our sense of place. While thinking of our relationship to the world has probably occupied us all from time to time, the area of environmental thought as an academic endeavour has recently witnessed a surge of attention (Gottlieb, 1996; Armstrong and Botzler, 1993; Oelschlaeger, 1991).

A multitude of factors have probably contributed to both academic and popular interest in environmental issues and debates, but one significant factor is a general perception of mounting socio-environmental degradation of the earth, even among those who may not completely understand or accept what it implies for their own lives and lifestyles. Phenomena such as an accelerated rate of global warming, ozone destruction, global forest depletion, acid rain, toxic waste dumping, and a host of other environmental concerns linked to human activity have given many of us cause to re-examine our relationship with the planet and the rest of its inhabitants.

While many fine minds have attempted to expand our understanding of how we might situate ourselves (and our selves) in the world, it could be argued that one result is a degree of confusion for those who come into contact with such wide differences and disagreements in environmental thought. Anyone reading in the area has been inundated with arguments and counter-arguments in an ever-expanding social/environmental dialectic. As Oelschlaeger (1991) stated:

> As understood today, it is a melange of competing philosophies, ranging from resource conservation to so-called deep ecology.... Understanding all these different, sometimes inconsistent, and even contradictory ideas of wilderness requires a long and careful consideration, itself caught up in the vagaries of history and thickets of detail (p. 3).

Oelschlaeger sees the development of the idea of wilderness as "...a heightened awareness by the agrarian or Neolithic mind, as farming and herding supplanted hunting and gathering, of distinctions between humankind and nature" (p.3). From this position of a more or less simple distinction, he proposes that,

> ...prospectively, the idea of wilderness may be understood as lying along a continuum where it is, on one end, little more than a romantic anachronism and, on the other, a category intrinsically bound up with the emergence of an evolutionary viewpoint on cosmological process (p.3).

In academic circles, Oelschlaeger's prophetic position has already been realized. Perhaps most prominently, Arne Naess (deep ecology) and Murray Bookchin (social ecology) write of cosmology and the evolutionary place of humanity in nature. Both, of course, disagree with each other on significant and subtle issues. Since the popularizing of the writings of environmental thought and ethics with Aldo Leopold's A Sand County Almanac, a litany of philosophical niches have been carved out by a variety of thinkers. Besides deep ecology and social ecology, above, some of the approaches developed in the last few decades include: resourcism, conservationism, preservationism, biocentrism, ecocentrism, ecofeminism (liberal, cultural and radical), eco-socialism, postmodern ecology, individualism, political ecology, and eco-liberalism. There is a great deal of overlap among these (and other) approaches, but clearly, the dialogue concerned with the human-nature relationship is becoming crowded. Zimmerman (1998) thus remarks:

> To understand how dramatic are the changes that have taken place in public and academic attitudes toward environmental issues, the reader need only contemplate that a college anthology like this one - now in its second edition - would have been completely unthinkable a little over a generation ago. At that time, few philosophers, no matter what their conceptual orientation and intellectual interests, would have regarded the very idea of environmental philosophy as anything other than absurd (p.2).

Yet for those of us who see our relationship with nature as vital to our relationship with the rest of the world, a recognition of the increase in intellectual traffic has direct application for outdoor programming. By engaging in the dialogue we increase our potential to transform the programs we deliver. One such program that has set for itself the ambitious task of attempting to connect students' sense of self to a larger understanding of, and empathy for, the world around them is "Explorations."

Explorations: history and program structure

The outdoor route was established as a specialization within the Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation in 1973. As students worked their way through the new curriculum, feedback was received from graduates that raised some concerns with regard to the lack of opportunities within the route to apply their skills as outdoor leaders. In an attempt to address these concerns, the instructors petitioned for a practicum component to be introduced in the final year of the program. The result was "Explorations," an alternative approach to academic inquiry in higher education that was designed to create a more wholistic and student-centred learning experience in the final stages of outdoor education at the university level. Explorations began as a pilot program in the 1980 - 1981 academic year. Henderson (in Cuthbertson, Scott and editors, 1997) wrote of its overall intent:

> At its core is the belief in the potential for a deep ecological education. Such an education can be accessible with time apart from conventional schooling and one's urban context through a fully functional group living experience with wild places well explored. The exploration is one of self, others and place (p.80).

It is clear from Henderson's explanation of Explorations that the program was intended to create a radical departure from conventional classroom-based schooling, a notion consistent with other theoretical positions that attempted to justify the experiential stance of education in the outdoors. But what may be important to note here is the degree to which Henderson, a graduate student intimately connected to the birth of Explorations, and Dr. Harvey Scott, the program's originator and advisor during its tenure at the university, saw the connection between Explorations and the educational potential of deep ecology. According to Scott,

> Given the imminent need to dramatically revise our environmental worldview and to turn around our treatment of our planet's biosphere, all aspects of our education need critical review and revision. All education and outdoor education in particular need to become a deep ecological education both in terms of goals and in terms of process. Such education would use active, learner-directed explorations as direct educational experience in, for, and most importantly *with* the outdoors. This deep ecological approach to education would result in an environmentally activist citizen who sees self as an equal partner with nature. A deep ecological ethic and world view suggests a radically different model for education (in Cuthbertson, Scott and editors, 1997, p. 80).

Using travel experiences in nature as a focus for this deep ecological approach to education, the program sought to encourage a learning environment that connected the students' concept of self to other concepts encountered in the preparation and implementation of their travels. Concepts such as physical, social and emotional risk, self-sufficiency and reliance on others, and a deep appreciation for the natural world were to foster an exploration of how the self was connected to the rest of the world.

Experiences in the Explorations tradition have included retracing historical routes such as snowshoeing from Lac La Loche to Fort McMurray via the Methye Portage (1981), or canoeing from Rocky Mountain House to Fort William on Lake Superior (1989). Dog sledding in the Northwest Territories, sea kayaking on the west coast, backcountry skiing in the Rocky Mountains, and canoeing various parts of Western Canada provided the majority of travel experiences for Explorations members through its fifteen year history.

Generally speaking, groups planned one or more trips, depending on available time and funding as well as on the ambitions and unique goals of the Explorations members of any given year. Most groups chose to develop either two shorter trips (of two weeks or less) or one longer trip (in excess of three weeks or a month), and with some exceptions, these trips ended around the exam period in April. The group participating in this study (Explorations '96) set ambitious trip expectations for themselves with a 30-day backcountry ski trip from Jasper (Maligne Lake) to Banff (Mt. Norquay ski area) during the month of March and a six-week sea kayaking exploration of Haida Gwaii (the Queen Charlotte Islands) off the west coast of British Columbia. Explorations '96 ended with our arrival in Edmonton on June 16th after the sea kayak trip. In a letter to Bob Henderson that was read at the closing ceremony of Explorations '96, Harvey Scott wrote of this final year:

> If, as it seems, this is to be the penultimate Exploration, you are a most fitting finale to a unique and radical experiment in libratory [sic] self education. Each crew has seized the Explorations opportunity in their own right and painted their own unique vision on the Western Canadian landscape. Yours has been

> remarkable in a number of ways - most obviously in the scope and grandeur of the adventures and wild places you explored... (in Cuthbertson, Scott and editors, 1997, p.81).

Students were expected to raise money for the expeditions and traditionally received assistance from institutions such as the Canadian Association of Physical Health, Education and Recreation, Parks Canada, the Canadian Geographic Association. Some groups combined their trips with proposals that included such works as trail maintenance and signing. For example, Explorations '84 paddled the Athabasca River from Athabasca to Fort McMurray and posted public safety signage along the route, a project supported by the Alberta government through Alberta Parks and Recreation. Virtually all groups engaged in more informal and personal fund-raising ventures, such as bake sales, garage sales and the like. Explorations '96 members were particularly adept at creative techniques in fund raising, combining institutional grants and bake sales with the development of projects such as "Adopt an Explorer" in order to raise the $16,000 needed for both trips.[1]

Dr. Scott put a good deal of effort into the application of the program to ensure that it followed its philosophical position of being student centred. Explorations was developed with the intention of creating a decision-making structure that would be as non-hierarchical as possible. A conscious attempt to limit hierarchical structures in Explorations has meant that students in the program are given very real decision-making power and responsibilities. This attempt to limit hierarchy and devolve decision-making to group members was extended to the program advisor and graduate assistant who work with the Explorations members. For example, in the Explorations '96 experience, the advisor and the department administration recommended a graduate assistant (me) to the newly formed group, but the group could have rejected the proposal without reprisal. Such a decision would also not have severely hampered the group as there were more graduate students than I who were in a position to take on that role. While final responsibility for administrative aspects of the program did indeed rest with the group's advisor in order to satisfy protocols of academic integrity and liability, this example merely demonstrates the extent to which the program was concerned with flat-structured decision making. Choices on where to go on trips, how to conduct group affairs and any other decisions and planning - major or minor - that needed to be made in order to realize the group's goals were made by the members of that year. Specific applications of this level of student involvement during Explorations '96 are raised in the next chapters.

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[1] "Adopt an Explorer" was the somewhat unique invention of Kathlene and Anne, two of the very motivated Explorations '96 group, who managed to set up a foundation of sorts which could receive tax-deductible donations supporting the endeavours of Explorations members.

Along with empowerment comes an equal level of responsibility, and the history of Explorations abounds with examples of students rising to the challenges. In the winter of the academic year preceding the official start to Explorations, Dr. Scott traditionally provided an orientation for students. The intent of this initial meeting, besides assessing potential interest, was to lay out the framework and requirements for the course. These requirements were, in different ways, both limited and expansive. Aside from a general expectation of assisting with overall preparations and actually carrying out a planned trip, the only required aspect of Explorations was an individual project. Each project was to involve some element of researched relevance for the current year's expedition. Student projects ranged from natural science and interpretive studies of the areas travelled to cultural histories and socio-political investigations. Several people chose to reconstruct historically accurate gear or clothes from the era in which an original (i.e., European) exploration of the route was conducted. In short, then, while the formal requirements for the course were limited, the possibilities for involvement, both through the individual projects and in group planning tasks, could become enormous.

Ideally, students were expected to have taken all of the courses offered within the outdoor route by the time they reached the tripping portion of Explorations.[2] In this way, Explorations, as a practicum course, was meant to be the culminating experience of the students' degree program at the university. In another way, though, Explorations took on a larger meaning than that of just one course. While only one particular course in the final two years of the students' program was officially titled Explorations, there were a number of courses that preceded the actual trip or trips and were designed to prepare the students primarily in the areas of skill development and group processing. Although each course stood on its own merit, the high degree of integration among experiences is generally acknowledged by those who were connected with the program. Consequently, what was seen as this gestalt of courses leading to the final goal - the trips - came to collectively take on the name Explorations. No doubt one contributing factor to this cultural phenomenon is the fact that a more or less consistent group of people typically formed and began to take these prepatory courses together approximately a year and a half prior to the trips being realized, providing an element of cultural belonging that begins to take shape well in advance of the final experience. Additionally, as with other groups before it, the group members involved in this research project established the anticipated trips as a focus, and began to plan informally more than a year in advance. The name Explorations, then, generally took on more meaning than can be normally attributed to one course. Explorations came to mean the entire process, which in the case of Explorations '96 lasted from the fall of 1994 to late spring of 1996.

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[2] For more specific information on these courses, see the University of Alberta's course calendars for the years between 1980 and 1995.

Explorations: its relationship to outdoor education in Alberta

Justifications for the inclusion of outdoor education (in the tradition of the Explorations experience) in public education curricula are varied, but almost always include: improved physical fitness and skill acquisition, more positive and sophisticated social interaction, personal challenge/self-improvement and an appreciation for "a novel, universally enjoyable, aesthetic setting - Nature" (Henderson, 1987).[3] Explorations, as we have seen, was in some ways a reaction to traditional, classroom-based learning. Like other outdoor programs, it tended to follow L.B. Sharp's maxim of ensuring that "Those things which can best be taught in the outdoors should there be taught" (Donaldson and Donaldson, 1958, p. 17). Internalizing the messages from Jean Jacques Rousseau's early references of guided discovery in nature through to L.B. Sharp's well-known statement above and Julian Smith's vision of education *in* and *for* the outdoors, Explorations and the outdoor route at the University of Alberta was not dissimilar to a whole range of programs that sought to take students into the outdoors.

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[3] There are other conceptions of outdoor education than that presented here, or as it was conceptualized in the outdoor route in Physical Education and Recreation. The program leading to Explorations at the University of Alberta was, for example, more heavily reliant on tripping as a focus for student education. Other programs across North America might differ considerably from the U of A model (for a somewhat different treatment of the topic see Ford, 1981). A variety of forms and types of programs claiming some ownership of the term "outdoor education" exist that would not identify on a tight parallel with Explorations. Examples would include residential camping, school-based environmental education programs, outdoor centres and agricultural education. However, this study is more concerned with the type of outdoor education that is predominant in Alberta's post-secondary institutions, and more specifically, with the Explorations vision of education in the outdoors. Therefore, although there may be some parallels and some differences between Explorations and other types of outdoor education, I have attempted to limit the discussion, and therefore the study, to these specific parameters.

Indeed, although there are differences in approach, there are also some quite tangible parallels between Explorations and other post-secondary programs in Alberta. The undergraduate program at the University of Calgary, for example, is billed as a pursuits (i.e., skills) program. Named "Outdoor Pursuits" (ODPU), the program's second through fourth years has a focus on field trips, "leadership developmente [sic] and skill acquisition" (ODPU homepage, 1999). Similar to ODPU, outdoor education at the University of Alberta is housed in the Department of Physical Education and Sports Studies, drawing its rationale and mandate from the tradition of Physical Education. Such an arrangement is in line with the philosophy of the Department of Education in Alberta which also places outdoor education within the scope of Physical Education in its curriculum guides for elementary and secondary schools. As with Explorations and ODPU, Augustana University in Camrose, Alberta has developed an outdoor program that has a heavy emphasis on skills acquisition and field trips. Together, these three institutions offer the bulk of what could be considered coherent and comprehensive progressions in outdoor education programming at the post-secondary level in Alberta.

privileging technical expertise

As outdoor educators, we have found that direct contact with relatively undisturbed natural areas, especially those that tend to evoke positive aesthetic responses from students and participants, is one of the most effective methods in promoting and enhancing an appreciation of, and a connectedness to, the natural world. As implied above, much of the pedagogical foundation for outdoor education in Alberta universities has rested on this premise. Lending validity to this emphasis are the staggering number of personal stories of those who have made their connections by touching, seeing, feeling, hearing, smelling, tasting, and "being" in those settings we have come to know as wild or natural areas. In reflecting on my years as an outdoor leader, I am struck by the number of times and by the emotional conviction of many participants who have expressed an increased sense of attachment to "the environment" during and after an outdoor adventure. Anecdotal reports from colleagues and friends in the same field indicate to me that my perceptions in this regard are not unique. For that matter, my own relationship with the earth has been significantly shaped and nurtured by similar experiences.

The literature is also rich with research projects that report participants' enhanced connections to nature and wilderness as a result of experiences in those settings. For example, in a phenomenological study, Segal (1988) found that, over time, participants experienced an increase in sensory awareness and feelings of catharsis, which led to a realization of connectedness to something greater than the traditional, somewhat limited, sense of self. Stringer and McAvoy (1992) likewise explored the connection between the wilderness environment and the potential for enhancing spirituality. In Canada, Horwood (1992) and Henderson (1987), among others, attempted to articulate the more intangible aspects of outdoor experiences that result from adventure outings. Part of what makes wilderness adventure an experience that captivates many outdoor enthusiasts is the feeling of closeness to nature. As Horwood (1991) contends:

> The primitive quality of wildness also provides for simplicity in everyday acts and materials. Bannock baked on a stick is wilder than when baked in a reflector oven. Labrador tea is much wilder than instant coffee. This is not to oppose technology, but rather to choose, always, those techniques which are simplest and most direct.

There seems to be in people like Horwood a profound desire to connect to the "wildness" of free nature, to divest oneself of the technological trappings of the constructed world and to experience as directly as possible humanity's natural roots. As Henderson's description of Explorations at the beginning of this chapter suggests, the removal of students from the classroom environment and into a natural environment was an attempt to integrate direct experience of the natural world into the university curriculum.

The physical demands and potential risks of the field-based educations delivered by institutions such as Augustana University, the University of Calgary, and the University of Alberta necessitate a high degree of technical skills acquisition because of the ambitious nature of some trips and experiences offered. Ultimately, in attempting to live up to the implementation of a philosophical position such as L.B. Sharp's in these field-based programs, the training of outdoor educators requires a level of expertise that increases the likelihood of safe travel in nature. As well, the physical demands of this type of outdoor education, justifiably linked to health benefits, need time and dedication in their development. Introductory and advanced undergraduate activity courses in canoeing, kayaking, nordic skiing, rock climbing, and wilderness navigation (to name a few) are testaments to the strength of the area of physical and technical skill acquisition within the broader framework of outdoor education in Alberta universities. During the study period (fall, 1994 to spring, 1996) such skills courses were common, and indeed dominant, at the three main post-secondary institutions in Alberta that housed outdoor programs. Unfortunately, while the physical demands of outdoor education situate one part of the field comfortably in the realm of active living, and arguably in health promotion, it is the extent to which other aspects of outdoor experiences have become subsumed by the technical orientation of skills acquisition (or the extent to which outdoor education in Alberta has been effectively reduced to skills teaching) that is at issue.

One reason for the demand for technical skills lies in the type of outdoor employment opportunities available in Alberta, and it would seem that these jobs are dominated by requirements for technical expertise. I have worked for a number of years in mainstream guiding and instructing in Alberta for a variety of outfitters, camps and outdoor centres. My positions were all predominantly concerned with the technical components of outdoor education. While my own experiences are anecdotal, they are by no means in isolation. I have listened to similar stories from colleagues in similar positions. A colleague who coordinated outdoor programs for Edmonton schools affirmed for me that most programs in the city's two largest school systems are skills based (personal communication, Schrader, Oct. 1996). Another colleague who directed a local camp and outdoor centre told me that school groups by and large ask for skills based instruction for their students, claiming that they wouldn't enjoy other activities (personal communication, DeLay, August, 1999). The proliferation of technically oriented institutions like the Yamnuska Mountain School is an indication of the outdoor field's response to public (i.e., commercial) demand for outdoor skills and adventures.

structural barriers in program delivery

The criticisms here may seem unduly harsh. After all, most of the people I have known in this line of work have a very genuine and deeply felt connection to the earth. But many outdoor educators are caught up in structural factors that are difficult to change, while the field itself continues to become more commodified. Clients on guided trips seek highly skilled professionals to keep them safe. Liability laws being written to manage risks in outdoor experiences require that organizations hire suitably trained and certified personnel.

We can begin to see that the need to address the issues of safety and competence of outdoor instructors can sometimes run counter to a program's goal of helping its students connect to nature. In meeting the market demands for skilled practitioners, many outdoor educator training programs are forced to spend a large amount of time on technical development in activity based, skills oriented courses, reducing the time available for facilitating other goals. Nonetheless, outdoor educators must seek to either change those structural factors (a very large task) or to alter their programs so as to address that which is deemed to be important, but not asked for explicitly by the rest of society.

What the discussion above illustrates, and the point I wish to make clear, is that while physical and technical skills need to be taught in outdoor educator training programs like those in Alberta, it is also relatively easy for those programs to be reduced to de facto skills programs without alarm bells being raised. The "market" will not readily notice if a component which actively stresses a connection to the natural world, is left out of most programs.

utilitarianism as a byproduct

To continue in this vein of privileging technical and physical expertise we run the risk of creating outdoor educators who may possess good technical and field skills, but who are also more likely to develop and/or maintain utilitarian and ethnocentric attitudes toward the natural world. By this I mean that outdoor education, at least in post-secondary Alberta programs, has unwittingly helped to constitute and maintain a sense of separation between humanity and the environment by, in some cases, uncritically providing physical activity in pristine natural areas. By virtue of being caught up in the structures of a field that is increasingly becoming more influenced by consumerism and liability considerations, outdoor educators tend to produce more utilitarian programs. Gough's (1990) statement tends to support this view:

> Many approaches to outdoor and environmental education embody a conception of the earth as an object of instrumental value, its worth determined by its uses to humans as a silo of resources, an archive of our heritage, a laboratory in which to make discoveries, a gymnasium in which to exercise, a recreational amenity, and so on (p. 12).

The cycle is indeed a damaging one: the general public demands skills-oriented programs, the profession responds and offers courses to satisfy the "need", and those who follow (either as participant or future instructor) begin to identify outdoor education with the activities and the skills rather than with nature. At this point, nature becomes more of a backdrop than the centre-piece. With nature being seen by many in the outdoor culture as a recreational playground in which to climb, mountain bike, canoe, hike or ski, it will become increasingly difficult to diminish, or even modify, the utilitarian orientation of outdoor education in its approach to nature. Using the wilderness or natural places as settings for enhancing self-esteem, interpersonal relationships and the like is also still a utilitarian approach to nature unless we include some method of attempting to seek the meaning of the places we travel in and through, outside the narrow vision of what value it has for us. Whether the skills are interpersonal, minimum impact, or technical, the point is that they are still skills which effectively ignore the significance of places unless a conscious shift is made in how those places are presented by leaders and perceived by participants.

The Explorations program sought to mitigate these effects to some degree. When Harvey Scott and Bob Henderson encouraged the kinds of individual projects described some pages earlier in this chapter, they attempted to provide a unique opportunity within the Alberta experience, one that sought to negotiate the differences between purely adventure oriented programs and other elements of outdoor education (e.g., a science based environmental education, or a socio-cultural education that focuses on the relationships between humanity and nature). The maintenance of an academic touchstone to the students' experiences in Explorations distinguished the program from others that might cater to a more commercially oriented clientele.

However, Explorations was not immune to the effects of commercialism in outdoor education nor to the commodified culture that has developed around adventure experiences. Despite the deep ecological approach embedded in the program, a tension between the goals of the instructors and the goals of some students has existed for some years. In reflecting on the outcomes of the various Explorations programs and his own goals for his students, Scott noted: "My main concern for Explorations has always been that I have trouble deciding whether Explorations groups ever get beyond the human self - human other phase of [S]elf-realisation" (in Cuthbertson, Scott and editors, 1997, p. 81).

Some of this difference between the formulation of instructor goals and student goals may be the result of the high degree of self-directed learning employed in Explorations, an issue that Dr. Scott has struggled with over the years.[4] On another level, though, the message in the outdoor culture that speaks to students not only about employment opportunities in their field, but about what kinds of expeditions and trips are most valuable, may also contribute to expectations of their learning.

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[4] For a profile of the students in Explorations '96 which includes their individual goals for the program, see Appendix E.

the politicisation of outdoor education and place

According to Harvey (1989), the "communities of money and capital" tend to overwhelm and dominate our sense of the more traditional communities rooted in place, rendering them as "...no more than relative spaces to be built up, torn down or abandoned as profitability dictates" (p. 233). In other words, Harvey sees the deterioration of meaning which gives each place its own uniqueness. For him, capitalism has coopted the way we relate to communities and to each other by creating a social atmosphere in which bonds of personal dependency have given way to "objective dependency relations" (i.e., relying on the object of money in satisfying one's needs rather than direct relationships with other people). Harvey also sees a shift towards service relationships that are made rational - or at least rationalized - by the exchange of money as opposed to being grounded in any sense of communal solidarity. This encouragement of individualism created by a money community has the effect of holding other aspects of social space to ransom by facilitating the manipulation of those aspects in the public and private spheres (Harvey, 1989).

Although Harvey and other geographers who write about place seldom mention outdoor education or recreation, several of the issues they raise are germane to the field of outdoor education as it has developed in Alberta. For example, Relph (1976) observes that in the shallowest ways of thinking and talking about place, landscape is treated superficially and without due attention to the qualities of that place. Under such conditions, "...places can be treated as the interchangeable, replaceable locations of things, as indeed they are by multinational corporations, powerful central governments, and uninvolved planners" (p. 143).

It is precisely this superficial and utilitarian treatment of places that may be seen in the outdoor culture's failure to connect more deeply and more consistently between and among places. It is entirely possible that unprecedented opportunities to make money from the promotion of outdoor adventures have encouraged an unconscious relationship to nature that is founded on self interest rather than Self interest. In other words, while many in the outdoor field say that we hold nature in high regard, our actual behaviours in nature may belie our professed respect for the qualities of natural places. Examples of such behaviours are present throughout the outdoor culture. Paddling "destination" rivers, climbing all the 14,000 foot peaks in the Southern Rockies or keeping a birdwatching checklist are forms of relegating places in nature (and even wildlife) to an accumulation of personal achievements.

Johnston and Edwards (1994) detailed the evolution of mountaineering, a pursuit that might be said to parallel the rest of the outdoor world, from a small "socially aware and reflective" sub-culture that was quite connected to the communities and people in the areas they climbed to the much larger and commodified climbing culture that exists today. In comparing the expenses and logistics involved in climbing in the Himalayas, the authors contrasted the one hundred fifty British pounds needed in 1951 by Shipton to employ three Sherpas and spend the entire season in the field with the following:

> Members of the 1978 American Women's Expedition to Annapurna, for example, first faced the task of fund-raising $80,000 before they could initiate a journey that led 10 members to climb the mountain, and eventually one member (with two Sherpa guides) to summit. Personal funds were used for travel to Nepal, lodging and food while in Katmandu, and personal equipment. Expedition funds were used for 8,000 pounds of food and equipment acquired in the United States, Nepalese expedition permit fees, porter and guide wages, and 4,000 pounds of food and supplies purchased in Nepal. It took a caravan of 230 people carrying 12,000 pounds of supplies - an average 66 pound load - three weeks to walk from Pokhara to Annapurna base camp (p. 465).

Increased involvement of corporations in the form of sponsorship helps to make some of these dream trips possible, but this has not been without costs to the mountaineers and their values. "Corporate sponsorship has shaped mountain experiences, and even the fantasy of a mountain experience, in order to sell commodities to a consuming culture" (Johnston and Edwards, 1994, p. 468). The result, according to the authors, is that demands are placed on the adventurers seeking sponsorship to participate in the building of a mountaineering image as it is constructed by media and advertising.

Opportunities for outdoor educators and instructors are also opened by taking on clients or working for organizations that offer high-adventure trips and experiences to those people who have the money and time, but not necessarily the background in outdoor travel. As Johnston and Edwards note, "…more and more mountaineers are able to sustain their lifestyle as professionals by participating in an alpine ecotourism industry, an industry which, for various reasons, is undergoing rapid expansion" (p. 468). Such a rapid expansion of mountaineering - or any popular outdoor activity - can result in a cultural shift that emphasizes the activity or event itself and not the place. There seems to be little accomplished outside of the monetary relationships created when a local priest in a Himalayan village is moved to tell a Western climber that "I always pray to the local deities for snow when you outsiders come to our valley, so you will go away. You use all our firewood and show little respect for our traditions" (Johnston and Edwards, p. 469).

Any culture that has moved so quickly toward commodification as has the outdoor culture is bound to experience some pains in its educational efforts. In being exposed to the opportunities for the high adventure experiences told in magazines, other popular literature and indeed by word of mouth, students entering the field cannot help but be influenced by what is generally narrated with an awe for technology and technique and an admiration of newer, more bold adventure.

the city-nature split

Another issue within the outdoor culture is the lack of transfer between revelations experienced on outdoor trips and any significant lifestyle changes once those same people return to the urban landscape. A quarter century ago, the dissonance between attitudes and behaviour led Maloney and Ward (1973) to conclude that "In colloquial terms, most people say they are willing to do a great deal to help curb pollution problems and are fairly emotional about it, but, in fact, they actually do fairly little and know even less" (p. 585). More recent attempts to connect outdoor travel experiences with changes in urban lifestyles have not met with significantly more success than their earlier counterparts. DeLay (1996), Duenkel (1994) and Potter (1993) all found that feelings of closeness to nature and eco-centric perspectives often slipped to more utilitarian outlooks when participants returned to interact with the cityscape.

Clearly, a culturally accepted split between the "urban" and the "natural" has formed in contemporary North American society, wherein the natural is predominantly seen as therapy for urban ills and pressures. Friese, Hendee and Kinziger (1998) analyzed promotional material and curriculum information from 246 "wilderness experience programs" (WEP's) in their attempt to create a typology of wilderness use by these organizations. Friese et al. determined that

> ...it is clear from promotional material that wilderness characteristics are promoted by almost all programs as an attractive feature of their experience, and are seen as vital for designing metaphors, creating a positive environment for growth, and providing opportunity for running challenge adventure activities (p. 44).

That these experiences in natural settings can be extremely beneficial is not at issue here. What is significant in the description of WEP's by Friese et al. (1998) is that wilderness characteristics seem to be consistently marketed in contrast to the urban landscape. The themes of wilderness as places of challenge, peacefulness, beauty, and as an ideal setting for reflecting on life's directions are consistent in the programs that were analyzed. Both leaders and participants on outdoor adventures invariably play off the beauty of nature against a perception of the aesthetic and moral bankruptcy of urban areas. Cities are very often seen as antithetical to nature in contemporary society. The message we have been socialized to accept as nature lovers is that cities are the enemy. As Rees (1985) wrote:

> Antiurban sentiment in America has a long history and a distinguished pedigree. The most celebrated minds, in a sequence that runs from Jefferson to Lewis Mumford and includes Emerson, Thoreau, and Frank Lloyd Wright, have registered distrust and disapproval of the American city. Public attitudes are more difficult to gauge, but if the attraction of idealized images of small towns is a reliable measure, they too have been ranged against the metropolis (p.26).

An unfortunate effect of marketing wilderness in this way is a contribution to the maintenance of the split between human places (i.e., cities) and natural places (i.e., wilderness). Moreover, cities become seen as places from which to escape and nature is seen as a place to escape to. In speaking to the escapist character of wilderness trips, Gough (1990) stated:

> The spiritual renewal that is often claimed to flow from wilderness experiences may help people cope with the stresses of urban life, but it is doubtful that we can expect or encourage large numbers of people to depend on them for their sanity. If we are expending our efforts and precious energy resources on making pilgrimages to wilderness chiefly because we do not much like our own backyards, then it may be time that we put more effort and energy into improving

the quality of life in the suburbs (p. 13).

While people seek out these adventure experiences, partly to connect with nature, they are also very often attempting to escape many of our other, mostly social, connections in the world, some of which directly contribute to our ability to engage in these experiences. It is precisely because of how our culture chooses to see the value of place and in how we dichotomize place into the rural-urban duality that seems to disconnect us from working towards ecological integrity in the city and prevents us from developing a more continuous and fluid sense of our urban selves and our rural selves.

Explorations falls victim to this rural/urban split to some extent. While it has encouraged a cultural connection for its students in their travels in nature, it seems not to have explicitly addressed urban issues, except to say that "Such an education can be accessible with time apart from conventional schooling and one's urban context..." (in Cuthbertson, Scott and editors, 1997, p. 80). This message of separating our experiences in nature from our urban lives is a common one received by those participating in wilderness travel programs. DeLay (1996), for example, commented on the distinctions made between civilization and wilderness in the minds of participants on a canoe trip and noted that the participants did not conceive of the travel to and from the area in which the trip took place as having any significance for the participants. The adventure experience itself is so often effectively severed from any continuity of understanding in its relationship to the city, or even to the cultural features surrounding the wilderness area, that it is not difficult to see how participants are led to construct them as separate and in opposition.

What, then, is the connection to be made between the issue of skills and the anti-urban sentiment embedded in outdoor culture? Simply put, it is the need for structural change in the way programs are offered. Creating the kind of skills-based experience that is exclusive of the cultural connections to nature is no longer enough. And while Explorations has made significant attempts to address these issues and design opportunities that are not exclusively made up of skills and technical expertise, structural barriers in the outdoor culture and the program itself may well prevent more students from effectively connecting to the intended outcomes.

summary

Although Explorations was perhaps in practice predominantly adventure travel based, it has attempted to help students become aware of the issues surrounding travel in natural settings, issues that go beyond the technical training of outdoor professionals. The elements of Explorations included and encouraged by its instructors that speak to the socio-cultural and socio-political components of the students' experience were an attempt to maintain an academic focus in the program. At the same time that students identified a need to test the leadership and technical skills gained in previous courses through lengthier field experiences, instructors such as Harvey Scott and Bob Henderson recognized that merely executing trips as a method of honing outdoor skills would fall short of the wholistic vision of outdoor education that they held for Explorations. In the face of a developing professional field that increasingly demanded technical skills as a priority, Explorations ran somewhat counter to other post-secondary and professional training programs available in the province. Therefore, they sought to walk a line that brought together the experiential focus of adventure travel with opportunities for exploring the land from a variety of cultural or natural science based perspectives. Ultimately, Explorations, from its deep ecological positioning, sought to foster an attitude in students that saw nature in a more egalitarian light. In other words, Explorations sought to reduce the utilitarian perspective of nature (e.g., "nature as playground") that might be produced in programs with a purely skills development focus.

Consistent with many outdoor program philosophies, the early developers of Explorations believed in a nature-based, student centred, and experientially oriented approach to outdoor education. However, internal and external structural barriers may prevent some students from connecting to deeper goals embedded in the program. Providing an opportunity for students to critically reflect on their adventure experiences by focussing on their relationship to Place as a wholistic concept, and thereby potentially developing a more deep ecological consciousness as it has been described in chapter one, is the subject of this study. Given my own theoretical framework, the goals of the program and my own research goals appear to be inseparably linked.

Chapter Three: Methodology and Me

I am part of the world.
I am able to change my life
for the better.
Therefore I am able to
change the world for the
better.
Helen and David Dufty

a brief reversal to examine the baggage

It is rather strange how I have come to this point, I think. My childhood was marked by an acceptance of the world on its own terms. My life and everything I knew was virtually unproblematic. Things were because they were. Life was the way it was because it was supposed to be that way. I do remember questioning the odd concept from time to time, but for the most part, I was taught - and I learned my lessons very well - that the kind of knowledge which was to be valued was all the "stuff" I could remember. And I was fairly good at it. I had a strength in language because I could remember the rules and the exceptions to those rules. I won more than my share of spelling bees in elementary school and I was extremely proud of that.

There is perhaps not much wrong with this. After all, we all need to have a memory capacity of some sort in order to function from day to day. The problem was introduced for me when the same attitude was extended to virtually all my learning. I became a memorizer of rules and patterns, but rarely stopped to ask myself why those rules existed, what they were designed to do, and whether they had any meaning outside of providing a certain amount of structure to the development of my "knowledge". The schooling I received did very little to encourage any other type of knowledge acquisition, and by design, actively discouraged anything approaching critical thought.

In my adolescent years, I became friends with a group of people who were outside my perception of the norm. Their ideas were, in many ways, different than what had made up my realm of possibilities to that point. There was probably no real "turning point" because of the multitude of untraceable contributions which take us to such places in personal history. But in reflection, I feel a sense of the beginnings of change from that era. The ideas themselves may not even hold much importance; just the fact that they were significantly different from my own might have been enough. I cannot be sure, of course, because those ideas eventually pointed in the direction I was to move.

Particular events in the history of my interaction with others, especially with authority, stand out in the fog of memory with a clarity that, I am convinced, is disproportionate to the importance given to those events by the others involved. I can, for instance, recall with present-time precision sitting in a classroom in grade 9 listening to our principal give a special talk to the boys in our class. Mr. Sontag said that there had been some “misbehaviour” in one of the boys’ washrooms further down the hall. He wasn’t blaming us, he said, but some group of grade 9 students had pencilled graffiti on the walls and had engineered a classic high school trick of locking the stall doors from the inside and then crawling out the space beneath the door, leaving it locked. He asked for our cooperation; the reputation of the grade 9's was at stake and we could help by challenging this behaviour if we saw it.

In the inevitable discussion groups in the hallway after Mr. Sontag's talk, I was ready to support the principal, to bolster the flagging image of the grade 9's. Rarely before or since have I been so mentally stunned as when one of the other boys questioned how Mr. Sontag could have known it was a group of grade 9's. That simple question shocked me into silence and continues to impress me and influence me more than 20 years later. The simplicity and clarity with which my classmate saw a potential flaw in Mr. Sontag's position struck me immediately and embarrassed me profoundly. In reflecting from today's vantage point, it has become irrelevant whether Mr. Sontag did indeed know if the rebels were grade 9's or if he had no clue about their identity. What was at issue then, and continues to be at issue now, is that I was ready to accept a condemnation of a vaguely identifiable group of people because 1) an authority figure told me it was so; and 2) they weren't me.

That was the first time I can so vividly recall finding my complacency being challenged by the insight of another and having to face what was, in my estimation, a serious deficit in my mental capacities. The challenge of ideas came again, however, and with increasing frequency it seemed. Gaining a degree of competence in asking pertinent questions was evidently not a talent I possessed, and I have been reminded on so many occasions since my initiation in grade 9 that improving my ability to question and to think is a struggle.

I also remember a mental battle over the personal values that these new ideas seemed to demand of me. There was a requirement to extend my sense of empathy (or at least sympathy) to those less fortunate than myself. It was not easily won, and I remain unsure that it is, or ever can be, completely won. Doubt rises all too often when the issues of life return to self interest. It is a battle which I continually seem to wage with my self and within myself. The word "battle" is also not entirely inappropriate for I feel a tension which may only fade as I progress in transcending this narrower sense of self, this perception which places me, as a single living entity, at the centre of consideration in my decisions and intentions to act. These reasons, and others, form a part of the attraction for me of Arne Naess' approach to deep ecology and the need to develop and articulate my own ecosophy. The patterns of events and thoughts that have led me to attempt an articulation of an ecosophy - and indeed the process of that articulation itself - have had a profound effect on the way I view the world and my construction of a Sense of Place. The effect has been enough to drive me in the direction that this study has taken. Aside from the academic goals and objectives I have set for myself in creating this project, the core of my motivation has been to facilitate a similar process for students with whom I work. There can be no doubt that struggling with some of the issues I have encountered in discourses on environmental thought has made my life more complicated. But the effort has also helped me to find a greater feeling of peace as well as some small degree of consistency between thought and action. Perhaps we all are motivated by that which has tended to be life-changing for us, and so I have been led to this project by the passion borne of discovering one source of self-perceived personal growth.

nature and the social construction of reality

Alfred North Whitehead stated in 1917 that, "Neither common sense nor science can proceed without departing from the strict consideration of what is actual in experience" (Schutz, 1962, p.3). According to Schutz, "...the so-called concrete facts of common-sense perception are not so concrete as it seems. They already involve abstractions of a highly complicated nature, and we have to account of this situation lest we commit the fallacy of misplaced concreteness" (p. 3). Within the context of social science, the notion that "what is actual" is not necessarily what is accessible draws us to the conclusion that reality, as we perceive it, is "really" an interpretation of the social situations in which we find ourselves. In the words of Berger and Luckman (1966), "Everyday life presents itself as a reality interpreted by men [sic] and subjectively meaningful to them as a coherent world" (p. 19). Stated yet another way, our realities are socially constructed (Schutz, 1962).

Reality is socially constructed. It is a simple enough statement, yet it has complexities that run deep and implications that perhaps run even deeper. According to Berger and Luckman (1966),

> The world of everyday life is not only taken for granted as reality by the ordinary members of society in the subjectively meaningful conduct of their lives. It is a world that originates in their thoughts and actions and is maintained as real by these (p. 20).

The degree to which we can see the world - especially the social world - as an ontological reality is contested by a number of qualitative researchers. Indeed, Packer and Addison (1989) asserted: "It is time to acknowledge that so-called objective reality is a product of human invention" (p. 17).

While we have traditionally seen nature as an ontic reality, scholars of environmental thought have more recently attempted to make room for the preservation of nature in a socially constructed reality. In outlining his epistemological position, Evernden (1992) wrote:

> Hence, the desire to discover certain and absolute knowledge of nature hinges upon a particular understanding of the human, as well as on a particular understanding of what it means to know something. Again, the definition and understanding of the natural is linked to that of the human (p. 40).

The compelling arguments of our world as socially constructed strengthens the need to entrench the exploration of a sense of place in outdoor educator training. The meanings attached to what people do, say, know and make use of in a culture are expressed both explicitly and tacitly and it is in making the tacit explicit that we are able to gain access to, and hence discover a deeper understanding of those meanings (Spradley, 1980).

What is important to consider here is that explicitly stated and rationally thought out worldviews can serve to ground future decisions and life choices. It is that which is explicit rather than that which is implicit and taken-for-granted that allows us to examine ourselves and our relationships to others more critically. In doing so, we open up our potential to consider alternatives that may lead to the adoption of a more compassionate sense of Place.

From a research perspective, if I hope to open channels and create opportunities for developing a broadened sense of place among members of the outdoor education culture, Von Glaserfeld (1991) suggests embracing the interpretation of another's construction of reality:

> The teacher - and I suspect, also the psychotherapist - who wants to modify some concept or conceptual operation in the student or client, must therefore begin by constructing a viable model of that particular subject's ways and means of organizing experiences. An important ingredient of success in both these vocations therefore seems to be what Vico called 'poetic imagination', for part of the practitioners' task is the hypothetical reconstruction of another's construction of an experiential world (p. 26).

The research implications, if not clear, are at least a little more in focus. Keeping in mind that the meanings of our lived worlds are expressed both explicitly and tacitly (Spradley, 1980), if I hope to be able to facilitate a compassionate sense of Place in outdoor education students, I must also facilitate an articulation (i.e., a reconstruction) of their experiential worlds. Understanding the participants' perceptions of the outdoor culture and then encouraging them to articulate their own experiences is key to helping them become subjects of conscious reflection (Freire, 1970).

methodology and me

My initiation to academic research included this maxim: the research question should dictate the methodology. In other words, the knowledge we, as researchers, wish to gain about an area of study, embodied in the question(s) framed in our introductions should seek out a match in methodology. In the name of preserving research integrity, this was upheld as one of the great truths in providing direction for choosing the "appropriate" methodology. In the course of my learning, I have come to believe that this maxim is neither entirely truthful nor accurate. It falls victim to a central problem in positivistic approaches to research, namely, the refusal to admit the subjectivity of the one proposing the research. Comstock (1982), put it well: "Positive social science sees society as an objective phenomenon which can be described as a set of ahistoric forces which constrain human behaviour" (p. 372). However, what I now find most interesting is that people who engage in mostly qualitative research also subject themselves to this process of choosing methodology. But in accepting such a law for research - even if qualitative methods are ultimately employed - the objectivist mindset once again holds sway in ways that may indeed be damaging to the research being proposed. An example from my own experience serves to illustrate this problem.

Like many other budding "qualitative" researchers, I went to great lengths in my Master's thesis attempting to explain why my chosen question would best be served by an ethnographic approach. The most shocking, and perhaps most cathartic realization, though, came when I was forced to recognize that I also expended considerable efforts *designing my question so that it would best be answered by qualitative methods*. I hid that knowledge from my committee and, to the best of my ability, from myself. I was fearful that the integrity of my study was at stake. Now I realize that the opposite is much closer to the truth. The integrity of my Master's thesis was not in jeopardy because

I was engineering my question to fit the kind of study I wanted to conduct. The greater danger was in placing an objective veil over a subjective process; the study's integrity was at stake because I neglected to proclaim who was asking the question. That I have an orientation to life and that this orientation gives meaning to the questions I ask should be the given in any research development equation. Touraine (1981) asserted that "...society is drama, it is a play not of situation or intent, but of social action and social relations" (p. 1). Research in social science is also such a play, with myself as protagonist. The analysis and conclusions I present to the reader of this study are, as Berger and Luckman (1966) insisted, perceived through the filter of my own existence, told through that filter, and then heard through the filter of the reader. The resulting conclusion should, I believe, be stated as clearly as possible: who I am will dictate both the question and the methodology. Who I am will even mediate, to some degree, the outcome.

This said, I cannot allow a disintegration of academic rigour in my research endeavours. Schutz (1962) made this quite clear in his approach to social science. While his reasoning for maintaining an "objective stance" in the development of his theory on social research may have contained some motivation for attaining credibility for qualitative social science methodology from a positivistic research community that demanded objectivity as a benchmark, his reminder that researchers must always be aware that they are researchers is nonetheless sage advice. How else can I present to the world a document claiming to have an analysis of culture and social phenomena that is more than "mere inventions of the researcher's perspective..." (Lather, 1991, p. 67). It is precisely through a constant awareness of my role as researcher and the accompanying attitude of self-critique (which I believe I maintained throughout the study) that the requisite rigour has been established.

My claim that who I am as a person of interests will dictate my methodology is also not an invitation to relegate ourselves (or others) to certain types of research approaches. Castigating positivistic studies as ineffectual, for example, will do little for me or for the greater body of research in the long run. The natural sciences, and to a lesser degree, positivistic social sciences and psychology have indeed contributed to our understanding of the world in which we live. What is important, however, is to encourage all researchers to recognize that the subjectivity of the human condition plays a part in the orientation to research, the choice of methodology, the formulation of research questions, the operationalization of the study, and even in the outcomes. Merely that would be a large step toward raising the level of conscious recognition of academic research as a political act. In an attempt to operate within the academic community and retain the integrity of my beliefs as well as what I have come to see as an important ingredient in any of my research projects - my humanity - I have chosen to take a stride in the direction described above.

critical social science

The introduction of research as a political act raises the spectre of another paradigm in research methodology: critical social science. In asking themselves what distinguishes critical social research from merely descriptive, interpretive study, Carspecken and Apple (1992) concluded:

> ...the critical approach to field research is distinguished first of all in terms of the motivation of the researcher and the questions that are posed. Critical researchers are usually politically minded people who wish, through their research, to aid struggles against inequality and domination (p. 512).

While I would *like* to consider myself politically minded, I must admit that I am really just beginning the process of becoming consciously politicized in my treatment of outdoor education. Nonetheless, Carspecken and Apple speak to a concern I have about all types of research: namely, how and whether the knowledge gained in research will - or will not - affect others. My Master's thesis, for example, did little for society in general, even less for the participants in the study, and virtually nothing for nature. I did manage to make an extremely modest contribution to my academic area, but the greatest contribution was to me and the advancement of my career. In conducting research for this project it became important to me that the research contribute to politicizing outdoor education by providing insights (for the participants and for myself) of how outdoor education could go beyond the apolitical models followed by many programs. I did not want to reproduce the overwhelming dearth of change I witnessed as a result of my (non)actions in my previous degree.

In making room for a critical perspective within the framework of ethnography, Quantz (1992) strikes a key theme echoed by a number of critical theorists and researchers: "As a 'project,' critical ethnography is recognized as having conscious political intentions that are oriented toward emancipatory and democratic goals" (p. 448-49). Emancipation - work that results in positive social change - is the tie that binds all critical social science research together. For Freire, Lather, Fay and others of this persuasion, the central aim of critical social science and research is emancipation. For example, according to Comstock (1982),

> The function of a critical social science is to increase the awareness of social actors of the contradictory conditions of action which are distorted or hidden by everyday understandings. It is founded on the principle that all men and women are potentially active agents in the construction of their social world and their personal lives: that they can be the subjects, rather than the objects, of socio-historical processes. Its aim is self-conscious practice which liberates humans from ideologically frozen conceptions of the actual and the possible (p. 371).

The question of how the notion of critical social science applies to Explorations members, a group that could easily be described as advantaged on many levels, definitely privileged in terms of race and class, can be answered appropriately at this point. In a dialogue on liberatory education between Paulo Freire and Ira Shor (Freire and Shor, 1987), the issue of reproducing a culture of domination through the technical training of students is raised. An apparent moral dilemma is presented to the teacher when liberatory education encounters the pedagogies of traditional education. The goals of the former are at odds with the latter, often seeking the dismantling of practices that, taught by a transfer-of-knowledge approach, guarantee the continuation of an unpoliticized, and dangerously hierarchical curriculum. However, the technical knowledges that allow students to participate in the job market of their chosen fields are generally gained through those very practices embedded in traditional education. Thus, it is understandable that students would demand training that would provide them with some sort of hope of employability (Freire and Shor, 1987).

For me, this has been a source of frustration because of my perception that I was being untrue to a liberating pedagogy if I taught the technical skills in outdoor education. Those skills are demanded in the market economy of outdoor adventure recreation and education tourism, and teaching them seemed to be merely propping up that which I critiqued in the previous chapter. On the other hand, if I were to follow a moral high ground by helping students only to critique their chosen field, I would be effectively preventing them from participating at all. Freire and Shor (1987) provided the key to unlocking this dilemma:

> Both the traditional and the liberating educator do not have the right to deny the students' goals for technical training or for job credentials. Neither can they deny the technical aspects of education. There is a realistic need for technical expertise which education from a traditional or a liberatory perspective must speak to. Also, the students' need for technical training in order to qualify for jobs is a realistic demand on the educator. Nevertheless, what is the *only* difference a liberating educator has on this question? The traditional educator and the democratic educator both have to be competent in their ability to educate students around skills needed for jobs. But the traditionalist does it with an ideology concerned with the preservation of the establishment. The liberating

> educator will try to be efficient in training, in forming the educatees scientifically and technically, but he or she will try to *unveil* the ideology enveloped in the *very* expectations of the students (pp. 68-67).

Freire's comments open the door to the concept that allows a liberatory pedagogy to be applied to the education of outdoor practitioners. That is, the training of outdoor educators and recreation professionals, at least in the province of Alberta, is often narrowly focussed on skills and on technical performance. The present market system demands that we train future outdoor educators in technical skills applicable to the field. However, as long as we allow students to be unproblematically initiated into a series of practices that reconstitutes the domination of humanity and nature through the ideologies of performance and conquest, outdoor education *will never* contribute systematically to saving the earth. Facilitating a compassionate sense of Place that extends beyond the immediate self and seeks to understand the meaning of the places of others will simply be overshadowed in a pedagogy that places technical expertise as the main priority because of job market demand.

I believe it is in coming to understand outdoor spaces as places infused with historical meaning and as part of an interconnected web of other, meaning-filled places that will take us beyond treating nature as a playground, beyond what Shogan (1988) referred to as "physical activity in the wilderness." Such is the emancipatory project facing those of us who choose to be involved in the training of future outdoor educators and recreation professionals. One of the questions I find myself faced with in my method has to do with deciding just how critical, how emancipatory my research was given my original goal in assisting the participants in the development and articulation of their personal worldviews toward a more compassionate sense of Place. Before answering this question, a discussion of the method and its potential integration with Explorations is required.

the vision and its blind spots

Initially, there were twelve students considered members of Explorations, eight women and four men. During the course of the program, Explorations lost two members, both women. A tragic highway accident on February 7, 1996 claimed the life of the first individual; the second dropped out of the program of her own accord. Explorations, as an academic endeavour for the students, was scheduled to officially begin in the fall of 1995 and continue at least to the end of the academic winter term (April 30, 1996). In anticipation of the tasks that lay ahead, the group began to organize itself during the winter of 1994/95 in an attempt to make some decisions and to develop some direction for their program. All individuals in Explorations '96 were considered eligible for participation in the study and all but one decided to do so.

At one of the group meetings in the fall of 1995, I made a formal presentation to the members of Explorations regarding my proposed research. The presentation itself was extremely brief, the content consisting mostly of a few words to the effect that I was interested in studying how outdoor education students developed a sense of place. Some questions were asked with regard to the meaning of the term "sense of place" and I provided some clarification of how the term has been used in the literature. The central message that I wanted to convey was that I was interested in exploring their relationship to nature and how that developed - and would continue to develop in Explorations. I did not spend any time on theoretical development or on a critique of the outdoor culture in order to avoid unduly influencing the information I might receive from them. At the end of the presentation, I invited the students to ask for a consent form if they were interested. From that point, it was up to each individual to approach me if they wished to participate. Two members signed consent forms that day (Kathlene and Bailey) with the rest approaching me over the next two to three weeks. After my initial presentation and invitation, I did not broach the subject of participation with any member of Explorations unless they asked me first. Ultimately, eleven of the twelve students chose to participate. A copy of the consent form can be seen in Appendix C.

I relied more heavily on some participants for two reasons: 1) it became clear that those who spent a significant amount of time on the trips provided the greater part of the observational information and insight that was key to the thematic development; and 2) certain individuals seemed to take a more active interest in the study, and were therefore much richer sources of information. This was especially the case for those students who agreed to keep journals and share them with me afterwards. However, the final effort is an attempt to provide some insights from all who participated (seven women and four men).

My own role in the group was that of the graduate assistant, proposed to the Explorations students by the Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation and accepted by the students. My official function was to assist them in the development of their program in as non-hierarchical a manner as I was able to negotiate. Ultimately, from the program's perspective, the ideal would be for me to become a functioning member of the group with no more or less power than any other member. However, I was asked by the members to provide some group processing and team building sessions during the fall of 1995. The effects of this were to give me a closer relationship both with the group and with some individuals, but also to constitute my position in the group as somewhat different from that of other members. The role of teaching assistant, the fact that I was not in Explorations for degree credit and my general knowledge of backcountry travel served to position me both inside and outside some of the group's experiences.[1]

My original interpretation of the implications of this for the research was that a role which involved initial input from me, but with the intent of becoming lower in profile during the planned expeditions, would not undermine the objectives of either Explorations or the research. I based this hypothesis on three reasons. First, my own status as a group member had already been established and was given credibility by the students in that they had accepted me early in the process. In this way, I had to spend less time and energy justifying my presence than if I had joined at a later date or as a researcher who is asking for much and giving little in return.

Second, the fact that the group asked me to facilitate some of the learning in the fall of 1995 should have allowed me to address the course learning and the research together. Indeed, the program goals and my research goals were fairly consistent.

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[1] It should be noted that despite the fact that I was the teaching assistant for Explorations '96, I was in no way responsible for evaluation of the students or for disseminating marks or grades.

Through the process of working with others to conceive of, design, plan and ultimately live a series of expeditions, it was hoped that the members would explore more than the physicality of the land through which they would travel. It was hoped that Explorations would provide opportunities for members to gain a greater understanding of the relationships that inform and influence their world. If the preceding can be said to be a goal of the program, it is difficult to separate it from the purpose of my own research, namely to examine and influence the process of developing an articulated, compassionate sense of Place. The foreshadowed program structure appeared to have a wonderful fit with my research.

Third, as a lower profile member in the group during the expeditions, I would have the advantage of being able to observe other members from a less obtrusive position within the group. This time would be used to gather knowledge on how the initial phases of the program (pre-trip) may have affected participants' senses of place from their conceptions at the outset. Yet as Packer and Addison (1989) suggest, my relationship to the group and its members was a dynamic, part of which was influenced merely by the presence of a research project:

> This is an important hermeneutic principle: that as the researcher learns about the social interaction he or she is researching, he or she also learns about him or herself. In interpretive research, the researcher's understanding of the situation transforms researcher, participants, and setting in a widening of horizons (p. 42).

Indeed, this widening of horizons is to be celebrated (Carr and Kemmis, 1986) and I embraced this opportunity. It was, after all, part of the point of this project to introduce an element of critical social science.

With all of this in mind, I attempted to carry out the research through both formal and informal means. Readings, activities, discussions, interviews, and journal writing were to form the basis for the exploration and articulation of the participants' worldviews. Participant observation was utilized as an ongoing method to compare their expressed worldviews with their lived experiences and to gauge any changes over the period of study. As a general plan for carrying out the research, I proposed the following three-step outline. Phases 1 and 2 were conducted in the fall term, 1995. Later phases were conducted between January, 1996 and June of the same year.

phase 1: initial interviews

As advocated by Von Glaserfeld (1991), and in order to have a base for tracing any development in the participants' senses of place, I believed it reasonable to establish a perspective of their worldviews and perceived relationships to the earth before actualizing the planned expeditions. This was accomplished through a formal, but unstructured, interview with each participant. An informal agenda (see Appendix D) provided the framework for the interviews. It was my intention to invite students to explore the issues that were part of the agenda without providing too many leading questions or putting words in their mouths. During the interviews I concentrated on the explicit perceptions of the participants, but I did not merely ask them to outline their worldviews and their relationships to nature. Rather, I attempted to build on the more manageable conceptions of wilderness, home and outdoor education. I asked questions and then sought to expand on the answers that were given. The outcome, of course, was a somewhat different interview for each participant.

These initial interviews were in-depth and took between forty five minutes and two hours, with a typical session lasting seventy or eighty minutes. Although the process was formal in that there was a pre-arranged time and place for each, I found that the participants appeared able to feel more relaxed as the conversations progressed. I began each interview by asking permission to tape the conversation, after which I conducted a sound check. I also indicated to the participants that I would like the process to unfold more as a conversation than as a stiff question-and-answer period. I believe that approaching the presence of the tape recorder directly, allowing them to hear both of us on tape in an informal sound check, and briefing them on my intent for the tone of the interview resulted in a more comfortable atmosphere. For example, during Mary's session, I had to interrupt our interview to turn the tape over and we both realized that the last few seconds of conversation were unrecorded because of the length of lead tape that must have preceded the mechanical "click" indicating the end of the tape. When I had set up the tape recorder for side B, Mary leaned into the microphone and with the exaggerated voice of a radio announcer, her first words were: "Well, just to recap... (laughs). This is so much fun; it feels like I'm on the radio" (pre-interview).

Interviews were conducted in a few different venues including a coffee shop, an empty office at the university, my home, and at participants' homes. Interestingly, I found the most effective place for an interview tended to be at an office in the university. Distractions such as ringing telephones and family members seemed to break the participants' (and my) concentration on occasion in home environments and the noises of restaurant clatter also obscured the odd word or phrase requiring context to give meaning to the unintelligible or overwhelmed words.

The research project appeared to have a fairly high profile during the program's tenure and references to the project occurred several times during the trips and in participants' journals. The recognition was direct, as in the case of Anne's concluding remark after one journal entry: "Put that in your thesis, Brent" (March 25). Paula wrote in her journal that she spoke to her mother about my research project and occasionally someone would make reference to it while we were on trail. These interviews, along with a presentation to the group about my research at the beginning of the Explorations program may have encouraged a level of conscious awareness of the study among the members. At the close of each interview, I also mentioned to the participants that I would continue to gather information throughout the program, but on a less formal basis.

phase 2: exploring an expanded world

This series of pre-trip group discussions was designed to facilitate a critique of our intersubjective and individual notions and assumptions we hold about the various relationships in which we are engaged. Rather than a critique from a single source, I proposed at the outset that a number of perspectives be included in an attempt to provide an eclectic, rather than a dogmatic, approach. Among the discourses that I envisioned being useful were selected feminist theories concerned with place and identity, political economy, social constructivism, deep ecology, social ecology, and a global education/education for peace perspective. Among these areas of thought there is both agreement and disagreement, with much overlap on issues discussed. Combined, they reflect a great deal of what I see as the debate which must be engaged by outdoor educators in developing a compassionate sense of Place.

This phase of the research was to involve creating discussion and reflection among the group members by introducing activities and exercises informed by readings from the literatures cited above. However, the amount of time I had planned to dedicate to these sorts of conceptual discussions in our pre-trip sessions was severely reduced, due mostly to two unforseen factors. First, the process of consensus decision making chosen by the group, while useful and appropriate for this type of experience, initially took up more time in our weekly group meetings than any of the group members had anticipated. With group input necessary in such a process and with what proved to be an extraordinary number of pressing issues and decisions to address, my planned sessions were consistently displaced. Consequently, I did not have the opportunity to adequately present ideas and facilitate discussion on some topics, most notably in the areas of feminist theory, political economy and social constructivism.

The second factor tended to reinforce the first. Over the years, Explorations meetings were traditionally divided into two, one given to the types of logistical meetings mentioned above and another time during the week devoted to more esoteric sessions dealing with group and social issues relevant to adventure travel. The separation of these meetings was lost when one member petitioned the group to collapse the two time slots into one. The intent was to treat one half of the new meeting time as what had come to be known as "Brent's World" (a nickname given to the sessions I presented). Unfortunately, like the proverbial larger closet, in most weeks the time was inevitably filled most weeks with pressing practical matters. The pressures of these logistical preparations undercut some of the objectives of both the program and the research. Potential implications are discussed later in this dissertation, but from a methodological perspective, the decision had a definite impact on the breadth of topics and areas covered in "Brent's World."

On reflection, I believe it would have been more effective for the research project if I had opposed the combining of the two time periods. I was attempting to reduce my interference in the level of participation in decision making for Explorations members, but in not speaking against the move, I think I compromised some of the program's goals and some of my own research goals. In the end, most of the critical questioning that did happen arose in informal settings on the trips themselves. In Brent's World, I managed to cover topics on goal setting and objectives, conflict resolution and interpersonal communication as well as conduct an "Urban Solo," the details of which can be found in the next chapter and in Appendix B. With the exception of the Urban Solo, these were largely introductory sessions for the process of group building and did not specifically address the issues I had in mind at the beginning of the research project. On the other hand, the day-to-day experiences and conversations provided by the events occurring prior to and during the trips allowed us to organically develop our own critical issues.

As well, I encouraged participants to keep a journal in which they would reflect on their experiences. In the early going, the program advisor and I discussed the prospect of student journals as a mandatory element of Explorations. No doubt this would have aided my research, but the idea of introducing a journal as a required part of course content was met with what could be described as very vocal opposition from several of the students. The overwhelming sentiment expressed within the group at that time was that they had been required in many other courses during their degree program to keep a journal, and further, that the meaning of journalling for them was somewhat lost if it was a mandatory component of a course. In keeping with the intent of the program (i.e., non-hierarchical), journals were dropped as a requirement. Ultimately, three participants did share all or significant portions of personal journals they had kept throughout the winter and spring of 1996. Undoubtedly, this had an effect on the research insofar as the trip data came disproportionately from these three students. Their journals provided a rich source of information which looms large in the descriptive and analytic accounts that follow, because the reflections contained within had some significant insights for the research project. While everyone is represented to some degree in the interview data, the more intimate thoughts of most were not captured in the way that the journals made this possible for the individuals who shared them with me. Thus for the majority of the group, the analysis is restricted to what was said in the interviews and my own participant observation. This constituted a limitation for the research; however, in keeping with the non-hierarchical objectives and practices of Explorations, it was one I had to live with.

phase 3: expeditions and beyond

As mentioned previously, participant observation is a method I sought to employ throughout the process as a methodological complement to self-reported understandings such as the interviews and the reflective journals. Participant observation became prominent in the research during this phase as I attempted to gain insight into possible changes in the participants' lived senses of place. The method also served as a source for a comparison of life on trail and life in the city. Although I had originally planned to reduce my participation to the level of observation during the expedition phase of the program, I discovered that some of the most important transformational processes were actually those that took place on the trips in informal settings and in one-on-one interactions. It was on this informal level that the research project took on most of its significance.

In terms of the research, I was a fully functioning participant observer. My own role with regard to the Explorations program was to become a member of the group, a goal that was at least partially accomplished, given the constraints of some distinctions between myself and other participants (i.e., being a teaching assistant as opposed to a student). The tension between the program goal of not exerting undue influence on the group and the interventionist (critical) stance of the research proved to be somewhat difficult to negotiate.

In the end, I opted for more critical questioning of the group during the trip phase than I had originally anticipated, but I also chose to do this in as unobtrusive a manner as possible. For example, all group members were expected to give their opinions on possible courses of action in any given discussion. I made sure that my own opinions were not expressed early on in most discussions and then attempted to echo others who might have already spoken most closely to my concerns. On some rare occasions I offered more radical departures from the general tone in order to generate some reflection. During one such group discussion, for instance, I asked a general question about why it was that people felt that they needed to reach Banff as an ultimate goal for the ski trip. More often, my input was offered in one-on-one encounters, such as the conversation I had with Mel while skiing on a cut line. I shared with her a personal goal of a "dream trip" that would involve no real destination and utilize no maps. Ultimately, she revisited that conversation later in the program and her response indicated that she had thought of its implications for relating to place. Numerous specific examples of how I balanced participation and observation can be found in the analysis of chapter five and readers are encouraged to formulate their own interpretations of my role as a participant observer. However, in spite of the difficulties I experienced in negotiating my role, both as a participant observer and as a member of Explorations, I was constantly made keenly aware of the tensions involved, a fact that kept the integrity of the research as a focus.

Participant observation during the trip phase involved carrying two field notebooks. Initial impressions, quick notes and hasty observations were recorded in a small, palm-sized notebook which I kept with me at all times. During the ski trip, I carried this in a bib pocket of my ski pants and during the sea kayaking trip, I carried it in a waterproof container in the cockpit of my kayak. At the earliest opportunity, usually at night or during longer rest breaks, I would expand the entries in a larger field notebook, taking care to recall as much detail as was prudent in the recording of the event. I also used this larger notebook to keep reflective writings and to pose analytical questions for further observation or reflection. During both trips I took notes on most days. In total, there were 67 days for which I had made some type of record. Most of the actual text analysis occurred in Edmonton after the end of the trips.

treatment of the data

Upon completion of the expeditions, I conducted another formal interview with the participants in order to encourage them to consciously reflect on the meaning of the Explorations program as a whole and to create an opportunity for the participants to have some input into my interpretations of their experiences. As with the initial interview, this interview was unstructured, but focussed on the various expressions of the individual's and group's sense of place during the course of the program. Both pre and post interviews were transcribed verbatim and a thematic analysis was conducted on the text, along with the pre-interviews, journal entries and my own field notes.

Including interviews, journal entries and my own field notes, I acquired in excess of 500 pages of raw data. In reading the transcriptions of interviews, field notes and journal entries, I applied descriptors to the meaning of passages and searched for commonalities among the meanings expressed by those descriptors. I organized these excerpts into files, categorized according to the meanings derived from the text and began to build the theory presented in chapter five from the relationships I discovered between and among those excerpts. The textual analysis was not limited to any specific level of linguistic structure (e.g., sentences, paragraphs) in order to allow for meaning to be attributed to anything from short phrases to lengthy quotations.

Transcriptions were read and re-read many times as the analysis took shape. The development of the relationship between the concepts of home and self serves as an example of the evolving analysis. In deciphering meaning from blocks of text, I wrote short phrases or words in the margins of the transcriptions that attempted to capture the essence of the textual meaning. Eventually, descriptors such as "home has parts of me" and "home as family" joined other descriptors like "home is personal belongings" and "bedroom is home space" to become "home as an extension of self." The context surrounding the chosen text was also taken into account in an attempt to stay truer to the intent of the individuals' words. In this way, categories of the analysis formed, melded with or collapsed into others, ultimately creating that which is presented in chapter five.

In partially answering the question I posed some pages back about whether my project was indeed emancipatory, I would propose that, on the whole, the methods employed conformed with the requirements of the study. I believe that the multifaceted approach (i.e., data collected from interviews, participant observation and journal entries), although limited to some extent by the low participation in the journalling, nonetheless allowed me to compare events from more than one perspective. The result was a greater richness of information that added to my overall understanding of the experience of those participating in Explorations '96. It also offered a more comprehensive representation of the effectiveness of my own approach to introducing change to the culture of outdoor education in Explorations. A prime example is to be found in the section on "Affective Comfort" in chapter five. Interviews alone would not have revealed the complex layering of meaning that I was able to explore as a result of comparing my field notes to journal entries dealing with the same events. A more complete answer to my own question can only be realized once the analysis has been reviewed, a task more suited to the final chapter.

Chapter Four: Research Timeline

Introduction

In chapter one, I outlined how this project was conceived and I challenged the traditional concept of sense of place as a privileged notion that is bestowed upon those who spend a great deal of time in one locale. In developing my theoretical framework, I proposed that we should include alternative ways of gaining a sense of place that seek to incorporate the places we know well with the places of others. Utilizing Naess' work on Self-realisation as a starting point, I presented my belief that such a connective web of places should be encouraged in order to develop a sense of oneness in our experiences of place, both in our everyday lived worlds and in our travels with the outdoor education culture. After the outline of the Explorations program and its relationship to outdoor education in chapter two, the third chapter dealt with some of the methodological implications for conducting this study. It also attempted to frame the Explorations program in the research context

However, what is needed at this juncture is a timeline of events in the history of Explorations '96 so that the reader may be able to better build a mental map of the analysis in the context of the group's experiences as they took place. I have chosen to present this in narrative form in an attempt to give life to those events. I am hopeful that this section will provide a chronological anchor for the reader to use as a reference while digesting the analysis that is to follow in chapter five. The reader should keep in mind that in order to provide some level of anonymity for the participants in the study, I have changed their names in this dissertation. I have also chosen to use only a first name pseudonym in identifying each. In addition, there are occasions that I have chosen not to use any name associated with a quotation or journal entry. This is because I believe certain quotations, shared with me in some degree of confidence, require further anonymity.

a brief story in time

In the spring of 1994, a small group of students in the Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation at the University of Alberta approached the associate dean of undergraduate students. Their intent was to initiate a program (i.e., Explorations) that those who had come before them had the benefit of receiving. Explorations, a program begun by Dr. Harvey Scott and Bob Henderson in the early 1980's as a culminating experience for the undergraduates in the Outdoor Education route at the U of A, operated under Dr. Scott's (his students all called him Harvey) guidance until he retired in 1994. The program was caught in a curricular transition period for the faculty and with Harvey's absence, there was no faculty member assigned to oversee the final Explorations program. It speaks to the motivations of the students that it was they who initiated the program's operation for their final degree year. In order to provide some guidance and a sense of continuity, Harvey agreed to volunteer in the capacity of faculty advisor for what would ostensibly be the last year of the program.

Explorations itself was a single course, but was supported by a series of other outdoor oriented courses taught in order to prepare the students for the significant task of planning and implementing their own outdoor education experience as a group. This planning and implementation of trips was the central activity of the Explorations course, but Explorations and its satellite courses were collectively referred to as the Explorations program by the students involved. Traditionally, the program would informally begin in the spring, some eighteen to twenty months before the trips that were to be planned by the students would be ultimately realized.

Explorations '96 began to take shape in an official capacity in the fall of 1994. The students who were interested and eligible met with Harvey to solidify the membership for the program and this group met once or twice in order to discuss the outline of the program and its requirements. Once the basic structure of the group was formed, there was the matter of securing a graduate assistant, a position that is not - at least in theory - assigned to the group. Unlike most other positions for teaching assistants within the faculty, the graduate student who would like to work with the group is accepted by the current Explorations members in the same way that all decisions are reached in the program - through consensus. I was recommended by the associate dean and my case was put forward by Harvey, but the group had the power to turn down my application should they have chosen to do so. Their acceptance of me as the graduate assistant member brought the total number of people in Explorations '96 to thirteen. My role within Explorations was to function as much as a member as possible; there was nothing special about my official status in terms of leadership or authority within the group. As long as the group was operating safely, my job was to assist them in whatever ways I could to reach their objectives. However, the members of Explorations '96 were made aware of my research project, both by Harvey and myself, and collectively, the students also wanted me to facilitate some group process and reflective sessions during the planning stages.

During the next three academic terms (i.e., the fall of 1994; the winter of 1994/1995; and the fall of 1995), we met weekly to prepare for the upcoming trips. In the fall and winter of 1994/1995 potential trips and expeditions were researched and presented to the rest of the group by individual members so that a wide variety of experiences could be weighed and judged against the goals of the group and the program. The group ultimately chose two very ambitious trips, a 30-day backcountry ski trip in the Rocky Mountains from Jasper to Banff and a six week sea kayaking trip on the west coast of British Columbia. Another important aspect of the weekly meetings included group building, interpersonal communication, conflict resolution and other sessions outside of logistical planning. The responsibility for these, as requested by the group members, fell largely to me and these sessions came to be known affectionately as "Brent's World." As discussed in chapter five, these sessions suffered somewhat because the pressing need to make logistical decisions and plan for the physical preparation often cut into the time allotted for my presentations. Nonetheless, we did manage to address some of these issues either in class time or at other meetings off campus.

It was also my intention to introduce ideas and concepts that related to my research prior to leaving on the trips. I managed to include some of these ideas within the presentations I did make, such as a discussion on hierarchy within the context of group building in consensus based groups. We also talked about setting ambitious physical goals and the potential impact of these on the overall experience, a subject broached in the context of setting individual and group goals for Explorations '96.

The opportunities for expanding their connections beyond the standard outdoor education experience presented itself in the form of an urban solo. In the fall of 1995, I proposed an exercise that placed the members in groups of three to spend a night outdoors in the downtown core of Edmonton. I was initially concerned that there would be some significant resistance to the idea because it was extraneous to the task of planning, but to my surprise, the group accepted the proposal with a general tone of enthusiasm and a few seemed quite excited by the prospect. My goal was to expose the students to a different conception of the outdoors than the one lauded by outdoor educators. My hope was that they would begin to see, not only their own privileged positions in their relationships to the concept of being outdoors, but also to allow other perspectives to challenge outdoor education's message that we live the true and virtuous life. In essence, this was my opportunity to ignite some reflection on the political economy of outdoor education and recreation. The event was organized and was eventually executed on October 18, 1995. A description of the event can be found in Appendix B, but in brief the evening began with the whole group volunteering our time to serve dinner at a soup kitchen and a tour of the shelter. The rest of the night was spent in small groups trying to stay warm and find a place to sleep without the benefit of money, credit cards or any of their personal outdoor gear such as sleeping bags or camp stoves.

Aside from the weekly and special sessions, the group also spent an incredible amount of time fund raising. The energy put into this activity eventually paid off, as the group managed to raise the full funding needed for both trips, including food, transportation and gear rental. The commitment to this aspect of Explorations was truly sustained. For example, from the spring of 1994 when the group was still an unofficial entity, they held bake sales every Thursday, a tradition that lasted until the winter of 1996 just before our departure on the ski trip.

The successes of the group were matched by tragedies. The horrific challenges that we had to face, both as a group and on our own, should be considered nothing short of staggering. February 1996 would come to affect the group's experience in every conceivable way. Outside of the official analysis for this project, I am still impressed that the events in that month did not bring the long hours of planning and work to a grinding halt. Without the possibility of being able to convey the emotion tied to that time, I will not endeavour to do so. Kathlene Yetman died in a tragic car accident on February 7th, 1996. She was, as might be expected in the frenzied weeks before our first trip, involved in work for Explorations. Kathlene was driving to pick up three other members of Explorations to bring them back to a skiing class at the university. Those three people were volunteering at a camp just outside the city in order to honour a deal made with the camp director to trade physical labour for the use of the camp for a week in January. Kathlene died on the way to the camp.

Ten days later, on the morning the group was to leave for a five-day training trip to Jasper National Park, Anne received some significant burns in an accident with a camping stove. She spent the next week in hospital during which time she received skin grafts. The incident forced her to miss the first two weeks of the Explorations ski trip in March. Cynthia also decided in February that she could not participate on the ski trip because her recovery from a knee operation was slower than expected. Cynthia eventually withdrew from the program for unrelated personal reasons. Another member experienced rather deep emotional trauma as a result of Kathlene's death and also made the decision to remove herself from the ski trip prior to departure. Gary and Claudia (another member who did not participate in the research) began the ski trip, but both left early. Claudia left after the first week and Gary pulled himself out at the half-way point (Two O'clock creek) due to illness.

At the half-way point on the ski trip, the route crossed a major highway at a place called Two O'clock Creek. On our arrival, we were met by Cynthia, Sarah, Claudia and Anne for a reunion and a re-supply of provisions. There were some significant changes to the group's make-up at Two O'clock Creek with Gary leaving to go back to the city and Anne joining those of us continuing to Banff. With the whole group together for the first time in weeks, we were also provided with an opportunity to make some decisions regarding the sea kayaking trip. It was during this meeting that the group initiated the change from the original plan of paddling along the inside passage on the coast of British Columbia to what would be our eventual trip of six weeks in the Queen Charlotte Islands. The first stage of this decision making process was accomplished at Two O'clock Creek by deciding on the distance to be covered and the time to be spent on the water. The group chose to shorten the distance and, if necessary, lengthen the time commitment as a direct result of their experiences with the ski trip.. The final decision to change from the inside passage to the Queen Charlotte Islands was made at another meeting back in Edmonton once the ski trip had concluded. Explorations members also made the decision to hire Al Schaffer, a sea kayak guide to accompany us for the first week of the sea kayak trip in order to be adequately trained in paddling techniques, navigation and to practice judgement about ocean conditions.

The analysis has the potential to be somewhat confusing with names appearing and disappearing throughout the Explorations program. As well, it may appear that some members are more than adequately represented in the utilization of their quotations while insights from others seem less frequent. A good deal of the reason for this can be seen when one reflects on the amount of time each person spent on the planned trips. In order to facilitate a more complete understanding of which members were on which trip, and for how long, a listing of full and partial participation is provided below.

The final event worth noting in this section was perhaps not so much a tragedy, but it was, in my opinion, at least an unfortunate set of circumstances. The instructor of record for the course that was to include the five day backcountry ski trip in Jasper National Park (already mentioned as a training ground for the longer trip from Jasper to Banff) was not able to teach during that time. The replacement instructor, a competent instructor in her own right, took on the task of teaching and evaluating the students for the five day trip. At the end of the short trip, the instructor had evaluated the students and in meeting with individuals to give them their marks and final feedback, she wished them luck for their upcoming tour from Jasper to Banff. In the meantime, she had sent a letter to the dean of the Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation advising the school that, in her opinion, the students were not ready to take on a trip such as the one they had planned. Two letters from this instructor, the second to the university's administration, set off a series of events in which the Explorations members confronted questions about their preparedness for the trip. While virtually all the students respected the instructors' prerogative to question them regarding their readiness, most were unhappy with the manner in which she dealt with the issue. They would have much preferred that the instructor questioned them directly.

On the heels of the other tragedies earlier that month, this event threw up another barrier to the group's ability to make final preparations for the ski trip, namely to take time out from last minute plans to justify their abilities. But perhaps the more difficult, and important, hurdle presented was to the group's mental state. To be questioned in this way, and in the final days before leaving on the trip, by an instructor who had very little time to evaluate their ability as a group, took its toll on the students. In the end, several students lost a significant degree of respect for that instructor. A discussion of how this experience affected the group's overall attitude on the ski trip is presented in chapter five.

Following the second of the two major trips planned by the group, the sea kayaking trip, the members disbanded upon our return to Edmonton and the official status of Explorations came to a close. However, just as a period of unofficial association existed in 1994, there was also such an occasion in 1996. In the fall of that year the students came together once more to make an open presentation about their experience to anyone who might be interested. A final presentation is traditional for

Table 4.1: Participation Level During Trips[1]

Explorations Member	*Ski Trip (March 1- 31)*	*Sea Kayak Trip (May 5-June 15)*
Kathlene	None	None
Cynthia	None (Knee Operation)	None
Gary	Partial (left at 1/2 way point: Two O'clock Creek)	Partial (job commitments - left after first week)
Will	Full Participation	Partial (job commitments - left after first week)
Sarah	None (emotional trauma)	Partial (job commitments - left after first week)
Paula	Full Participation	Full Participation
Mary	Full Participation	Full Participation
Anne	Partial (joined at 1/2 way point: Two O'clock Creek)	Full Participation
Damian	Full Participation	Full Participation
Mel	Full Participation	Full Participation
Bailey	Full Participation	Full Participation
Brent	Full Participation	Full Participation

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[1] As mentioned in chapter three, one of the Explorations members decided not to participate in the study. This accounts for the name being omitted from Table 3.1. Her name is utilized only for giving context to the overall membership in the '96 Explorations program.

Explorations groups and it usually includes a slide show or some other visual display. It was at this presentation that I read the contents of Appendix A, discussed in the concluding chapter. The slide show and Explorations exhibition in the fall of 1996 was the last time that the members were together as a whole in any official - or unofficial - capacity. In laying out a general sketch of a few of the significant events during the tenure of Explorations '96, it is hoped that the reader will be able to keep a mental map of the group's chronology from its inception to its conclusion.

Chapter Five: Analysis

Have you ever noticed that when
you go away from a place,
you never really leave it?
Carrie McNeely, 1996

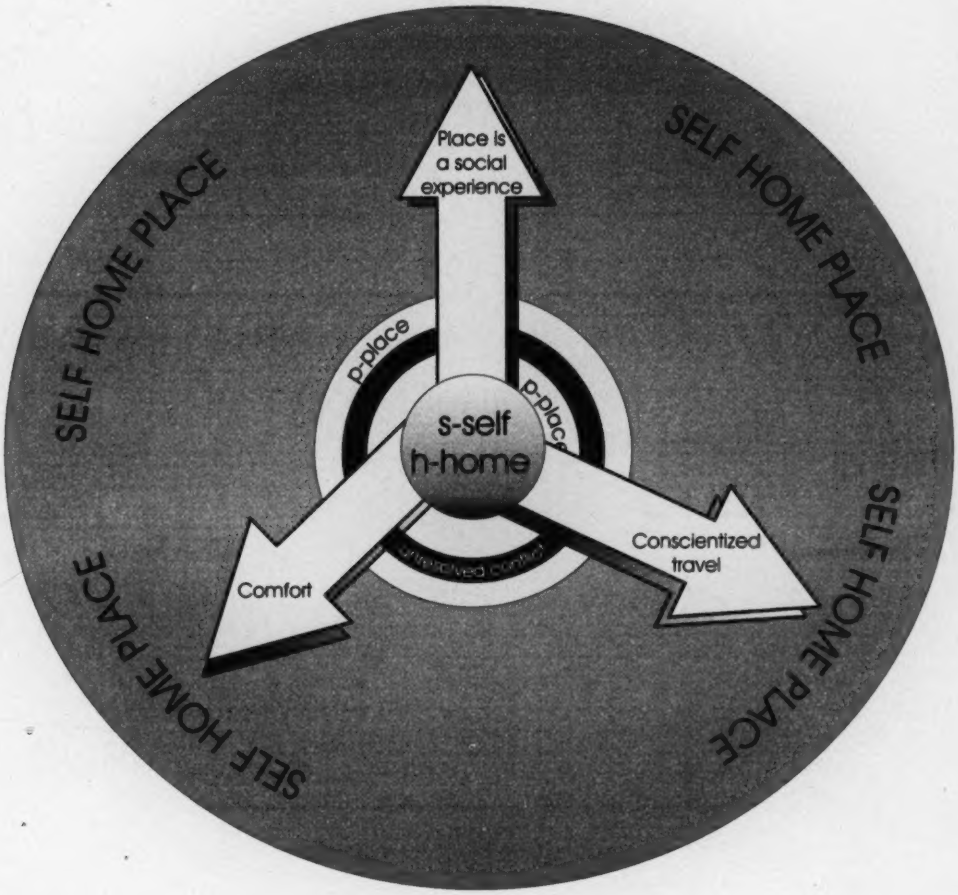
Introduction

Figure 5.1 outlines the structure of the analysis in this study. It would be helpful to keep in mind that while the organization of the structure suggests neat divisions, there is a great deal of overlap among categories and themes. Often I found that one quotation from a group member represented more than one meaning set in the analysis. The difficulty in this project was not in deciding what was relevant or important, but rather what was irrelevant and not important. There is little doubt that this study had a broadly defined goal and lacked specific procedures on how to accomplish its purpose; this was inherent in the methodology and hence intentional - at least partially. My task was to provide opportunity and some mental catalysts for the participants in their critical reflections of their relationship to the earth.

the model

Figure 5.1 is a synthesis of the information and the relationships of themes in this chapter into a one-page graphic representation. The rest of the chapter constitutes my attempts to explain and expand on what is displayed in the model. I am confident that inadequacies will be exposed in future research projects, both by myself and by others

Figure 5.1: Pathways to Place


SELF HOME PLACE
SELF HOME PLACE
SELF HOME PLACE
SELF HOME PLACE
Place is a social experience
p-place
p-place
s-self
h-home
unresolved conflict
Comfort
Conscientized travel

interested in this area. I not only accept this inevitability but welcome it as a sign of outdoor education's desire for growth and maturity.

The model can be thought of as divided into three interactive zones. The inner layer, or core, is the site from which any reflection on a compassionate sense of Place must begin, namely the self. This is the bodily entity that we know empirically. It is descriptive of our individuality and reflects the needs and desires of each of us as an entity unto ourselves (Naess, 1989). It is not merely a starting point that somehow falls away when confronted with the interconnectedness of the larger Self, but remains as a grounding for the development of our understandings "as we share and shape our connections to the larger" (Naess, p. 9).

The small-h home is intimately related to the self, but moves toward an increasing level of abstraction. There is a good deal of diversity in what is meant by "home" as it relates to the concept of self, and the varied ways in which the experience of home do or do not meet our needs and desires creates a greater diversity in our understandings of what constitutes a home. Yet, there is also a concrete aspect to the notion of home that cannot be denied. As the spatial axis for our lived relationships with the materials and people to which/whom we feel closest, home at this level is quite concrete. Whether it is loving or abusive, crowded or spacious, we tend to understand the rules of its functioning very well. Schutz (1962) establishes this type of intimate interaction with people and artifacts that are so familiar to us as face-to-face relations, those relationships that require less abstraction because we have such a deep familiarity with the particular social agents. We are not required to see such people in terms of their social roles as our primary way of relating to them. They are, with all the endearing and frustrating idiosyncracies of their personalities, known to us as individuals. Such is also the case for the material spaces we call home.

At this point I also rely on an assumption, namely that most of us have a desire to connect to the larger world in some way. While this is an assumption from the model's perspective, it was certainly validated by the Explorations members. Indeed, it could be said to be at the heart of adventure travel itself. According to Schutz, this connection requires an increased level of abstraction due to the fact that knowledge of the wider world is more removed from our everyday lives. But there is also feedback from an increase in knowledge and understanding of the wider world which affects and changes our own core - our self - and therefore our relationship with the world. Indeed, implicit in Schutz' theory is the implication that this sliding scale of abstraction is necessary if we are to conceptualize past our immediate bodies and attempt to gain connections with others and other(s') places. A dynamic between the concrete and the abstract is needed for us to operate as social beings.

This adapted construction of the relationship between concrete and abstract fits nicely with Naess' concept of Self-realisation, a concept central to the development of P-Place and H-home. From my perspective, then, there is a relationship between these two concepts that cannot be differentially valorized. In this model, the concrete and the abstract co-construct each other and in so doing become one; it is not really possible to claim accurate identity of one in absence of the other. Correspondingly, Naess' assertion that "all life is one" gains greater meaning with the inclusion of Schutz' theory of social interaction.

The preceding is an explanation for my own bias that such a connection to the world is not only inevitable, but also desirable. It follows, then, that as individuals connect to the rest of life on a sliding, dialectical scale between concrete and abstract, we should find ways to feel more connected, to understand others and other(s') places in the context of being one with all life.

The second zone of the model indicates the pathways and the barriers to developing a greater understanding and nurturing a greater connection to the larger Self. The arrows indicate the pathways found by Explorations members in our attempts to connect with others. The solid arcs through which these arrows proceed represent the barrier, a membrane that proved effective in its denial of our assumptions that merely "going to nature" will provide the connections and understanding we sought of the wider world through which we travelled. The barrier consisted of a number of components, but could all be captured by the concept of "unresolved conflict". The death of Kathlene Yetman and the resultant internal struggles that event produced for Explorations members, physical discomfort on trail, gender conflict, romanticizing nature, the style of travel and even our inability to get beyond point-to-point destination travel are examples of the internal and external conflicts we faced - both as individuals and as a group - that inhibited our connection to a larger world. In its various forms, it was this unresolved conflict that prevented us at times from moving toward the development of a compassionate sense of Place, or Self.

Both inside and immediately outside the conflict barrier is the concept of p-place. Small p-place contains, in its immediate sense, otherness, a landscape that is neither home nor H-home. It is further along the continuum of abstraction and more removed from our everyday lives. These places may be seen as foreign and separate from us; we might see them as worthy of respect, or we may even perceive them to be devoid of culture and attempt to subsume them if we romanticize their existence. But it is also surely a zone of transition. There is a higher gestalt to which we aspire than merely recognizing otherness or subsuming perceived voids; there is a connection among and between places and beings that is not quite satisfied by otherness, and thus a third layer is required.[1]

The third layer of the model is nebulous and fluctuating. This final zone is the embodiment of Naess' Self-realisation in the context of landscape. As with the conceptualization of Self, P-place and H-home are not ideals to be reached like a heaven or nirvana. They are not end goals, but rather "a way to live one's life" (Naess, 1989, p. 9). The concepts of place and home received similar characterizations by Explorations members and it is at the most abstract level that it becomes appropriate to think of these terms as virtually synonymous. While Place and Home cannot be said to be arrival points, I believe that a conscious orientation to the pathways beyond the barrier of our corporeal selves gave some of us a glimpse of the connections that exist for all life. There was - and is - a higher gestalt that is felt in making a connection to place that begins to negotiate our own niche in that place, the sense of belonging to a landscape that has a vast history and to which we have contributed without owning it, but also without having been consumed ourselves. After having spent long and sometimes painful hours developing the model that lies imperfectly presented in Figure 5.1, I happened upon a passage in a book by Naess that gave me cause for celebration and relief. According to Naess (1989) my own efforts in attempting to articulate the relationships among the concepts seemed to be at least partially plausible:

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[1] Borrowing from the psychology of perception, Naess developed a concept of gestalt that sought to tie various "pieces" of an experience together so as to bind the part-whole relational field. He explains that in his concept of relations among entities, there are wholes that seem to have a unity that makes them recognizable, a network of relationships that hang together in a way that cannot be broken into its linguistic or ontological parts without changing the meaning of the whole - or for that matter, its parts. Although Naess describes a hierarchy of higher and lower order gestalts, with "all life is one" of the highest order, the connectedness is such that parts of the whole define the whole, and as such, are not separable from the oneness of that whole. For a more complete discussion, see Naess (1989).

> There is at the outset something essential: for life, by life. But there must be an arrow. A direction, a starting from the self, moving towards the Self. It is a direction I can say *yes* to ethically. We may call it a vector - in tremendous, but determinate directions (p. 9).

The analysis that follows is not methodical. It could not be. The themes are so interwoven that a discussion which begins to piece meaning together in a patchwork fashion is not only appropriate, but necessary. I have chosen to organize this academic quilting bee around the various concepts within the components of the model. In this way I hope that the interaction between and among the themes is what is put into sharper focus rather than a demonstration of the themes themselves.

1. place is a social experience[2]

Experiencing place as a social phenomenon was perhaps the most pervasive theme developed in this study. In the final results, no theme was clearer - and yet more implicit - in the analysis of Explorations '96. *Place is a social experience* cut across all the other main categories and was a consistent thread throughout much of my observation. In this light, this theme could be said to have organized a great deal of the cultural meaning that was embedded in the Explorations '96 experience. That the construction of the participants' senses of place was socially layered was evident in all aspects of their travels. From remembering significant places by reference to social events that occurred in those places to anthropomorphizing elements of nature itself, the members of Explorations '96 set a social tone in the development of their relationship to the land. In my view, our experiences and even our relationship to the land became more positive when the social element was recognized and incorporated into day to day activities and thoughts.

Anne recognized the connection between sense of place and the social element when she reflected on Kathlene's death. In a journal entry on the ski trip, she had questioned someone's perception that she was a strong leader. She concluded:

> I think it had something to do with me and [Kathlene] always leading and talking about our trips and it's strange with her gone how my "sense of place" in the group feels different. Put that in your thesis, Brent (March 25).

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[2] In the analysis, the social thread appears in a number of themes and so is not completely contained in this section. The reader is advised to watch for its recurrence.

In attempting to assess the participants' relationships to nature before the trips began, I asked them about environmental issues and the meaning that nature and wilderness held for them. Recent courses dealing with environmental issues and human-nature paradigms were particularly formative for several people. For example, in expanding on her contact with the concept of intrinsic value, Anne cites readings from a course she took the previous year:

> That actually is probably one of the biggest changes in my own thinking from reading Oelschlager [1991] and reading those write-ups for Glenda's class. You know, I never really thought of intrinsic value before. I've been camping with my family as a kid, but it was always a recreational playground for me and I never thought of it as having an intrinsic value (pre-interview).

Will, who was taking the same course at the time of the interview, had a similar experience:

> We've been talking in [PEDS] 405 about the "land ethic" and that we're part of the community, but because we have a greater effect our responsibilities should also go up. I don't think that we should consider ourselves stewards over the earth, but I think that because we also have such a great effect, we should also be fairly responsible. I don't know, 405 and "Ethics" and whatnot has made me think a lot about these kind of things (pre-interview).

The experiences of Anne and Will were representative of other Explorations members, and it became quite clear that the relationship with nature was, for many, in the process of undergoing change as a result of their formal education. Mel was an exception here, but only because she had been exposed to some of these ideas through the summer camp she attended and worked at for a number of years. Her focus for Explorations in this regard was to try to become "more consistent between beliefs and actions" (pre-interview).

An interesting component of their relationships to nature prior to the trips was that every person recognized, on a theoretical level, that humanity and nature were linked in some way. For several people, the level of thinking was nuanced and included a global perspective. For instance, not long after mentioning the intrinsic value of nature, Anne spoke to the globalization of capital as having a profound effect on humanity's relationship with the natural world:

> We're going to have a greater disparity between the affluent and the poorer classes, and the bottom line approach is going to lead to having a careless vision of what natural resources we have left. [People] who have a vision of sustainable living are part of a dying mentality. Like, when I was in Brazil - the president's wife stole millions and millions of dollars from the public education fund. You know, [the president] embezzled so much money and now he's living in Miami with the millions that he stole. He was never prosecuted. And so it's the leaders and the political climate - the money motivations of multinational companies (pre-interview).

For Anne, humanity's relationship with nature is profoundly influenced by Western economic models. In similar fashion, Paula and Mary made explicit mention of this relationship as well. In discussing her desire to work in Third World countries, Mary explained: "...because they're part of the environmental crisis too. But until they're comfortable, living comfortable, healthy lives, they're not going to care, and I don't blame them for not caring, you know" (pre-interview). When I asked her what she thought was the largest environmental issue facing us, Paula also fingered large corporations: "Well, I think the problems that are with the big companies, the ones that no one can keep track of what they're doing - I think that those companies that do that kind of damage think they can control nature and just get profits out of it (pre-interview).

While most participants questioned Western culture's anthropocentric, capitalistic approach to the relationship between humans and nature, Gary, Anne and Mary managed to see some of the complexities that accompany such a view. Anne reported the following reflection during a weekend camping trip with other university students:

> And then, you know, I was thinking about it again on the weekend. There were a lot of guys driving by on their 4X4's with guns, eh? They were out hunting and a lot of people were saying - well, they were shooting them down. And I was thinking in my head, "Does an animal bred in nature have more intrinsic value than a cow that's being bred for the factory? Is there more intrinsic value there? There's a lot of questions, though, that kind of came up in my head this weekend. You know, when people go out camping once and they're - all of a sudden the urban scene becomes this bad, evil thing and being out in nature becomes the great harmony with the world. And you know, it's not. Let's not be so romantic (pre-interview).

In an honest self assessment, Mary saw a degree of personal difficulty in attempting to behave in a way that recognized the importance of life beyond just the human realm. In doing so, she echoes the sentiments of Mel's desire to be more consistent:

> Mary: I'm trying to do that more, but it's something that's hard to do... so it's something I'd like to be more aware of. Yeah, it's something I want to work on, looking at the world as more than just humans.
>
> Brent: But it's difficult?
>
> Mary: It's not automatic, yeah (pre-interview).

It was clear that the participants had done some thinking about human-nature relationships prior to our departure on either of the trips, even if some of it had been relatively recent. The important thing to keep in mind here is that these students saw humans as fundamentally connected to nature and part of the natural processes. Even though we might be seen as destructive, there was both an explicit and an implicit recognition from the comments above that humanity is woven tightly together with the natural world. In this sense, the constructed relationships that were held by the participants could be said to be social, or at least cultural. Anne, particularly, was impressed by the notion that we are in a co-constructive relationship with nature. In comparing the central message in Oelschlaeger's (1991) The idea of wilderness with another book she was reading concurrently, Anne demonstrated that she was keenly aware of the social and cultural ties to nature:

> The fact that I was reading The idea of wilderness at the same time. And that The idea of wilderness starts with paleolithic culture and the transition in various

> cycles of our development. And having the idea how your perception of the space around you has such an influence on the social structure and your spirituality. I could equate what was in Clan of the cave bear - the spirituality of those people - and yeah, it was just fascinating to get inside a culture I've never been able to actually live (pre-interview).

Anne's comment would become the embodiment of what we would eventually strive for in Explorations. We would seek to get a sense of how the natural landscape interacted with the cultures that inhabited those places. But it would be a long and difficult road for us, and we would battle with the Western cultural construction of adventure travel along the way. A more complete discussion is provided later in this chapter.

The message that people have a place in nature was a strong one among the Explorations members, and this is perhaps not surprising for a group of people that were training to make their living from contact with nature. But Will keyed in on a central dilemma for a number of outdoor educators when, in struggling with the notion that outdoor educators are contributing to the degradation of nature by encouraging others to participate in wilderness activities, he had trouble with what he saw as the alternative. From his comment that follows, it is clear that he sees direct experience in nature as more positive than destructive:

> And then the idea of teaching [students] - maybe as a solution - teaching people about wilderness, but [saying], "Don't go there, just learn about it, but don't do it" kind of strikes me as hard because it's hard to teach people. Like, you can read all

> the books you want about anything, but until you either do it or see it, or really experience it, it's hard to really understand (pre-interview).

Will's reflection raises the point in very explicit terms that people's understanding and connection to the natural world depend on direct contact and experience. He was, however, quick to add that there must be "some form of control, or actual learning or education going on. Just getting people all hyped up to go out to these areas and then just setting them loose is not really acceptable" (pre-interview).

Combining the very clear message that direct contact with free nature is essential in building a relationship with nature as a whole with the notion that education is, or should be, a key component of backcountry experiences, one arrives at the conclusion that the construction of nature in outdoor education experiences is inescapably social. Education requires a social setting, and when the education is tied to a values orientation that seeks to pass on a message about the natural world, the relationship to nature necessarily takes on a social character. This conclusion may not have been articulated quite this way by any of the participants, but it is nonetheless embedded in their responses to questions regarding their relationship to nature, especially in a professional context.

1.1 nature with social beginnings

For virtually every member, the introduction to outdoor living and travel had its roots in positive social experiences. Families and friends played key roles in the participants' initial involvement with outdoor travel. As a child, Mel did not particularly enjoy outdoor activities. As she says:

> When I was a preteen, or a kid, Mom would always take me, you know, she'd take me cross country skiing or hiking or canoeing, and I'd do lots of outdoor activities. I didn't like it at all; I didn't have fun - it wasn't fun at all. Anyway, so it ended up that it kind of turned me off some of that stuff... (post-interview).

Those early experiences had enough of an impact on Mel to give her cause for concern when she was registered for a canoe trip at a camp with girls her own age. However, she found the social element to be at the centre of a positive experience.

> But then when I was - it was when we were moving between Edmonton and Ottawa that summer, and I was all upset and I didn't want to leave. I was sooo worried; I thought, "Oh, I'm never going to be able to make friends; I'm never going to be able to be on my own." And she signed me up for my first canoe trip. And, uh, I didn't really know anybody on it. It was a second year's girls' trip and I'd never really been on one so I was worried that I would be behind everybody else and I wouldn't be able to keep up. Anyways, it turned out to be just the BEST two weeks ever. It was sooo amazing and I just had so much fun. And I look back on the trip now - it's one of the hardest trips. I can't even believe that was my first trip, because I saw one of the boys trips did it this year and they came back and they all just about died. [The leader] said it was the hardest two week they'd ever done. And anyway, so I just had the best time and really liked the people and I just loved canoeing (post-interview).

Damian was also enculturated by peers and when I asked him how he became involved in outdoor education he recounted:

> You know, it all started in high school actually. When I came to Scona, and I was still really into track and stuff like that. So, the first year I was still pretty much into track, but I was riding my mountain bike pretty heavily back then - uh, not going camping as much. And I still hadn't been on an overnight backpack or I hadn't been in a canoe. Grade eleven I met Mike and Rick. And they'd go biking in the mountains every weekend - whenever I'd be at a track meet, they'd be biking in the mountains - or hiking. Like, Rick's hiked every single hike in Jasper National Park, Banff National Park Guide Book. So, I kind of fell into that crowd (pre-interview).

Very few people discover outdoor activities on their own; as is the case for the members of Explorations, most are introduced to the likes of hiking, climbing, canoeing, mountain biking, skiing and snowshoeing by others. Whether it is through an organized group like Mel (summer camp) and Will (Scouts), or informally with family and friends like Damian, the majority of outdoor enthusiasts become initiated to the world of travel in nature in settings that are quite social. It is interesting to note that, by and large, we tend to continue to engage in our experiences in nature in social settings. Few of us reject or forego the social element during subsequent journeys to free nature and it is this recognition that must play a part in evaluating our relationships with nature. For the vast majority of backcountry sojourners, the experience of place contains a social component.

As Mary reminds us, a sense of place is in no small way affected by the people who share our physical spaces.

> It generally takes me a couple of -- two to three weeks to feel comfortable at camp - not comfortable within the setting, but comfortable with the people. But once I'm there, yeah, it feels like -- generally it feels like the place I'm supposed to be (pre-interview).

As mentioned, this thread of place as a social experience appears throughout the analysis. For most of the members during the phase prior to the trips, there was an expression of nature as distinct from the social meaning humans give to it. For some, there was a recognition over time that we did indeed organize our relationships with nature - and place in general - through a social lens. Others did not come to reveal this as explicitly, but observation bears out the important role our social make-up played in our construction of the places we came to know. Recall Naess' concept of gestalt earlier in this chapter. There was a recognition by some members that the social and cultural elements of an adventure travel experience seemed to change the very *nature* of the trip. I do not mean to say that the essence of their experience was changed - although this is undoubtedly true - but rather that the physical landscape became so intertwined with the social and cultural landscape that nature itself was part of a higher gestalt, a recognizable unity of relationships between people, emotions, memories, physical and mental landscapes, maps, wildlife and history.

1.2 travel, adventure and social construction

It is difficult to find a people that have stronger ties to place in nature than Australian Aboriginals, and as with other indigenous cultures, the land is sacred to many. But, according to Chatwin (1987), the traditional spirituality of Aboriginal cultures holds that the world was sung into existence by ancestors. These songs connect to form routes across the land, or songlines. And these songs, which match geological features with both ancient and more modern cultural history, must continue to be sung as the routes are travelled lest the world be un-made. We cannot compare ourselves in Explorations to such deeply entrenched spiritual traditions half a world away except in abstract form. And yet, in our Western mindsets, the land that we rationally knew existed before our arrival was only made real by our travels through it. Mary said as much to Anne during the sea kayaking trip:

> Mary today mentioned that she rarely thinks of places existing beyond her being there and that she knows this place does and she can come back to it in her mind when she'll miss the coast or this trip (Anne's journal, June 3).

Will's words regarding the need for direct experience in nature in order to understand a place and connect more deeply come back to life here. The meaning those places have for us were made by our experiences in them and with them. None of us can talk of Pipestone Pass, Burnaby Narrows, the Cline River, Skoki Lodge or Skung Gwaii as we did when we first looked at maps of those areas. We cannot even look at the maps themselves the same way any more - the symbols of space have become symbols of place. We speak of those places in reference to what happened to us, with us, among us, the events and thoughts that collided with the biology, geography and the geology to create meaning. We may not have sung parts of the Rocky Mountains or the Queen Charlottes into existence, but we did live some meaning of place into existence by our travels. What was important in our learning was *how* we travelled.

> It amazes me how the names of a place demonstrate its history. I never before thought of what Edmonton or such meant. And reading of the Haida words, names, forts, villages, chiefs... [and] to much less of an interest the miners, loggers and pioneers, the Charlottes seem more tangible to me, a bit closer to my heart. It's the same with watching the tidepools, birds, seals and touching the bark of hemlocks, Sitka Spruce and Alder trees. I love to become familiar with places I travel to. To make some connection, something that will link my memory of it to me (Anne's journal, June 5).

Anne's eloquent description of how she connects to places during travel is indicative of one of this group's biggest learning experiences. The way in which we travelled and also in which the members of Explorations conceptualized the value of travel is what changed most in our time together. From the single file, non-stop, point-to-point travel of the ski trip to the trackless, open waters of the Queen Charlotte Islands, we learned that mobility in moderation, part of what could be called a conscientized travel, creates extremely strong bonds to place. Over the span of our two trips, we learned that connecting travel pathways, building a mental map of these spaces we travelled through, allowed us to begin the process of recognizing those spaces in terms of place, somewhere that "became" for us because of our physical presence, and became more connected to us because of our mental presence. Bringing the land into being is where the physical, ontological realities of space meet the constructed worlds of place.

1.2(a) the desire to see it all

Despite the theoretical understanding of humanity's connection to nature spoken to by Explorations members during the pre-interviews, it became evident that theory and practice were not yet completely meshed. A major conflict that only became an issue during the ski trip was a deep-seated drive to "see it all." In terms of travel, the ski trip and the sea kayak trip were very different. The ski trip was marked by long days of moving from campsite to campsite. In fact, more than half way into the ski trip, I noted a comment from one of the group members that "this was the first time that we chose a campsite because it was beautiful rather than because it was dark" (field notes, March 20). While the issue was resolved to the group's satisfaction for the sea kayak trip, there was an avowed goal, for each member on the ski trip, and reaffirmed as a collective goal on at least two occasions, of reaching the final destination - Banff. An entry from my field notes observed:

> [We were] supposed to hit the road today - had a big talk last night with **everyone** (original emphasis) reaffirming their goal of reaching Banff - interesting!! Bailey talked to me briefly about his reasons for wanting to go on to Banff. Essentially, it revolved around the idea of accomplishment. He wanted to have the feeling of either having done it or having tried his best to do it. Although I asked why people were so intent on reaching Banff, no one else addressed the question out

> loud.... The concept of accomplishment for us as a group seems to be limited to attaining - or trying to attain - a physical goal, precluding other forms of exploring and/or connecting to the world we are travelling through. The trip has been defined by "making miles" and joy has become finding a pre-existing trail in order to travel faster (field notes, March 18).

We were indeed concerned with making miles. Mel noted: "I'm frustrated that folks think that miles are more important than group dynamics or conversation" (Mel's journal, Day 9).[3] However, Mel herself was caught up in the dilemma that faced the group, for she too was intent on "making miles" as a way to attain her goal of reaching Banff. After the same group meeting I referred to in my field notes (March 18), Mel recorded these thoughts:

> We had our first real group chat last night. Fuck!! Two weeks into the trip and this is the first time. I said I was willing to go to Banff at all costs. I need so much more out of this trip. We lack in all the areas that I see as key. And yet I want to sacrifice that to go to Banff. Is it pride? Hmmmm... (Mel's journal, Day 14).

Yet the culture of making miles can become a powerful draw. Almost in spite of a desire to make profound connections to the land, we were often caught in what seems to be its antithesis - the desire to see it all. In her post-interview Anne talked about the allure of covering ground in other travels and so allows us to realize that this desire to see it all was not limited to the unique situation of Explorations '96:

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[3] It is probable that Mel's comment here is based on her own inferences of the group's behaviour rather than anyone's explicitly stated preference for making miles. The push for mileage was largely an understood corollary of the more explicit goal of reaching Banff. As a group trying to accomplish a distance goal within a more or less rigid time frame and being consistently "behind schedule" for much of the trip, there was an implicit understanding that reaching our physical goal meant concentrating on forward travel at the expense of more socially oriented experiences.

> I'll always look back on my year in Brazil and think - I visited the south and the interior, and I didn't see northeast Brazil or the Amazon, and it feels like something incomplete because I'd love to go and there's so much more to see. And when I think of the Gulf Islands that me and Meagan just went to, we saw all of them that we wanted to see. And we didn't want to spend lots of time on Saltspring, but it'll always, for me, think "yeah, I'd like to go back to Saltspring so that I can see all of Saltspring." Like, don't ask me why seeing it from north to south or from east to west is important (post-interview).

This powerful desire to cover the entire distance of a trip, to somehow make a trip seem whole or complete by covering a pre-determined quantity of ground was undeniably part of our experience on the ski trip. Even though I questioned the group as to why they were so intent on reaching Banff, I discovered that it was easy to fall into the culture of travel for travel's sake, a mindset that made up much of my own experiences of tripping when I was younger. My personal goal was to have the participants question their "need" to reach Banff. But as the teaching assistant, I was committed to facilitating their quest and told the group this during one of the meetings out on trail. However, while I liked to think that I was playing a dual role (helping the group reach Banff while at the same time questioning their need to do so) I was not immune to blindly pushing ahead either. An incident I recorded relatively early on in the ski trip shocked me into this realization:

Gary, Bailey, and I were skiing out ahead of the group on a hard packed trail running mostly flat through a burned section of forest. At one point, we traversed a steep slope that dropped off on the left to a rock outcrop overlooking the Brazeau River some 70 feet below us. On this section, the trail was not very wide as it crossed the slope. Gary, Bailey and I stopped about 200 metres further along the trail. We waited for some time, discussing the need to go at least a little further for the day in order to make up some of the miles and days lost so far. Gary decided to set out and continued down the trail. I became a little concerned that the rest of the group had not shown up yet and told Bailey I would ski back to see what was holding them up. On the ski back I recalled the narrow section of trail above the steep slopes and began to wonder if I should have carried the first aid kit for the ski back. My mind conjured up images of one person having fallen over the edge and seriously hurt. When I arrived at that spot on the trail, I first noticed several packs discarded on the trail and everyone down on the rock outcrop milling about. At that point, a few noticed me higher on the trail and I called out, "What happened?" Mel replied with, "We were wooed by the beauty." It was only then that I realized that they were delayed on the trail because they had stopped to enjoy one of the natural features. There was a flurry of apologizing [for taking too much time] to which I replied that they had nothing to apologize for. The apologies happened twice more as people passed me on the trail. Mel even said that she felt guilty as though they were "bad kids" (field notes, March 13).

What I find interesting here is that we all had become - including me - so wrapped up with covering distance that it had become a surprise when someone (i.e., Will) had stopped for a while to enjoy and take pictures of a beautiful feature in nature and for others not to continue with haste on the trail if they were behind, so much so that the only thought I could have had was that something had gone wrong. I finished that entry with: "This speaks to the power of the accomplishment goal; it can even override the desire for a pleasant experience" (field notes, March 13).

Our lapse into a focus on covering ground by making miles despite our philosophical leanings displayed before the trip can be seen as yet another example of how the "practical" component of a trip can begin to take over from other goals. Earlier, I noted that the participants had embedded in their relationships to nature the notion that humans are deeply connected to nature as a whole. In this instance, any desire to maintain, and perhaps further such a connection seems to have been circumvented by the practical "necessity" of day-to-day travel, and hence treating the land as a corridor for reaching a single destination.

As noted above, Anne also felt that her travels were somehow incomplete unless she could say that she had seen it all. Twice during this explanation, she stated, "Don't ask me why!" Her inability to articulate what she considered to be a satisfactory reason for this part of her psyche was not dissimilar to the other members. While many in the group would come to question the way we travelled on the ski trip, no one was able to fully explain themselves - to their own satisfaction. In her post-interview, I pressed Anne by asking "So, I'm not allowed to ask you why?" She responded:

> Well, I don't know why. I don't. Like, when I - well, I sort of do, I think. Maybe it has something to do just with the geography and wanting to go far - I don't know. When I started my bike trip I had to get - like, my first week was just hell because I was out of shape - or not in good enough shape and just getting in the saddle all the time. But I **had to** finally stop myself and say, "Are you here to just go the distance and just say that you biked it? Or are you here to see Quebec and to see the Maritimes and *what* are you here for?" And I decided that well, "I'm here for the experience; I'm not here for making sure that I get from Quebec to Newfoundland." So, it seems like every time I go someplace, I always have to tell myself that again (post-interview).

Perhaps this is something we all need to remind ourselves of on occasion. In looking back on my own initiation to backcountry travel, the accomplishment of completing a trip and distances covered are aspects that I remember as being dominant in what it meant to have been on a trip. It is at least true that these components of my various trips were focal points of my discussions with others. This type of accomplishment may in fact prevent us from making those deeper connections that we so often look for in our experiences with nature travel. In the words of Alexander Wilson (1991):

> Nature tourism catalogued the natural world and created its own spaces out there among the trees, lakes, and rocks. It sold us nature-related products, and indeed it began to sell us natural space and experiences too. All of these experiences served to fragment the land: here we have a sunbathing beach, over there a nature

> trail for the blind, further along there's an RV (recreational vehicle) campground or a petting zoo or a singles' cross country weekend." Nature tourism differentiates our experiences of the natural world, with several consequences. The most obvious is that this differentiation makes it easier to package and sell nature as a product. It also means that more people can enjoy natural areas. It means that it's now more difficult to experience nature as a whole, as the total environment that for centuries and centuries has been our *home* - which is, after all, a very different kind of space from a "recreation resource" (p. 28).

Wilson's assertion that separation from nature as a whole is fostered in a tourism which is isolated from other ways of relating to the land could be applied to our own experiences on the ski trip. The singular purpose of reaching Banff did not readily facilitate or even permit a variety of self-earth relationships within that packaged trip. We woke, ate, skied as far as we could, ate again and then slept, a cycle that was repeated without much break. In this sense, we sold nature to ourselves as a product of the single activity of skiing - for hours on end. The focus for our group in the package of a "Jasper-to-Banff" experience was the accomplishment of that destination, and therefore exclusive in its approach to place. Other potential connections to nature were compromised as a result of the limited way we chose to relate to the land (i.e., as a travel corridor). All of this speaks to the ease with which modern adventure travel and its destination oriented experiences achieves its hegemony in outdoor education.

So much of our experience focussed on arrival in a physical place - Banff - that the connections we made during the rest of our travel were coloured by that goal. To the extent that this goal was all-consuming, we managed to separate ourselves from the potential of a higher connection to nature. As an unresolved conflict, our desire to see it all meant that many of the smaller places that we travelled through were subsumed by our goal of achieving a destination.

1.2(b) style of travel

On another level, the experience of the ski trip probably served as a learning/re-learning process for all of us. As a group, we realized that there are other elements of travel that are at least as important as arriving. The meaning of the maxim "it is better to travel well than it is to arrive" began to gain credibility throughout the trip. At our half-way point (Two O'clock Creek), we crossed a major highway and met with those Explorations members who were not on the first leg of the trip. The re-supply and reunion also provided us an opportunity to discuss some of the priorities for the upcoming sea kayak trip. An excerpt from my field notes outlines the prevailing mood regarding our style of travel:

> It was fairly unanimous - and especially from those who have been on the first half of the ski trip - that we should plan a trip that will allow for stopping early, educational experiences, hikes, etc. There was a comment from Mary that she would not go on a trip that would involve this kind of commitment for day-to-day mileage push. She suggested that instead of trying to do too much distance, we might consider taking six weeks to [cover the distance we had planned] instead of

four. There was a coalescing around this idea as we went around the circle to voice concerns and goals (field notes, March 20).

While the push for mileage played a significant role in defining our relationships to each other and to place during the ski trip, it was certainly not the only factor. The style of travel on a ski trip is necessarily single file. Defined tracks and trails through the woods dictate the path of least physical resistance. When no trail or track is evident, the lead person packs down the snow (referred to as "breaking trail") so that those following will find the going much easier. Breaking trail can sometimes be difficult enough to warrant the lead person to do this without the added burden of a load on their backs and so they will often drop their pack and then ski back to retrieve it while someone else continues in their place. Suffice to say that for the sake of efficiency, very rarely do backcountry skiers travel side by side. This mode of travel is a significant barrier to on-trail conversation and creates a degree of personal isolation in what is ostensibly a social experience. I noticed that in virtually every opportunity that offered a chance for socialization during travel, people took advantage of it. Frozen lakes or open fields with a snow crust that prevented us from sinking into deep snow provided some of the terrain that afforded people opportunities to ski side by side. Even though we were surrounded by spectacular and pristine nature, this pseudo-isolation seemed to take its toll on some members. Some wonderful conversations were had when members were able to ski next to each other and, as Mel notes, she desperately missed this social aspect of backcountry tripping:

> Today was a neat day. Skiing on the cut-line certainly isn't so beautiful, but wow, did it ever facilitate good conversation. I started out with Anne, and we talked about our dream trips. Coooool. That woman has some pretty neat ideas. I'd love to stay in touch with her. Actually, all the women on this trip are super cool. I also chatted with Brent for a while, and finally Mary. Oh, I'm so starved for conversation and it feels really good (Mel's journal, Day 18).

These social times proved to be extremely valuable for learning as well. For example, on different occasions, I talked with Mary about her style of divergent thinking, with Mel about the possibilities for a trip that she would be leading that summer, with Will about communication strategies, with Mel, Mary and Paula about deep ecology and with Paula about avalanche techniques. This is not to say that I was the designated educator of the trip; other conversations between and among various people produced as much insight for the participants. Rather, the significant discovery here is the *opportunity* for social contact that is less strained than communication in a single line. The physical style of travel on skis does not facilitate conversation with the other social agents sharing our experiences in nature.

While this type of travel can also provide a much needed break from others in a backcountry setting or a chance to relate to the natural world on a personal level, there are several reasons why this was not necessarily beneficial for us. First, spending thirty days in this mode of travel gave more than enough opportunity for individuals to retreat from the group and reflect. In other words, the balance between social contact and isolation was heavily weighted toward the latter. The fact that we were behind schedule, forcing us to ski as much as possible during daylight hours did not give us the option to choose one or the other. Second, we were all individuals in need of social contact given the circumstances that had unfolded in the two months prior to leaving on the ski trip. None of us could say with confidence, for example, that we had, as a group, sufficiently dealt with Kathlene's death. There was very little discussion that included all group members and from the resistance to seek any counselling assistance from outside the group by at least two members, it is clear to me that spending most of our waking hours in mental isolation from one another was less than helpful for most of us.

1.3 external pressures

There were other events outside of the group's planning and implementation of the ski trip that had a profound impact on the way the ski trip played out for us. From January to March of 1996, the members of Explorations worked furiously to make the trips they had been planning a reality. The breadth and scope of these trips were ambitious, to say the least; the logistics alone were extremely complex for a group that was relatively inexperienced in organizing and financing extended trips from scratch. The month of February was unkind and introduced a greater load for everyone to carry. Kathlene Yetman died in a car accident on February 7th; Anne was burned in a camping stove accident just over a week later and was forced to miss the first half of the ski trip; Cynthia's knee operation kept her off the ski trip entirely; Sarah also withdrew from the trip, due in part to the effects of Kathlene's death on her emotional health; and finally a letter from a respected outdoor instructor was forwarded to the university questioning the group's ability to complete either the ski trip or the sea kayaking trip. Yet, despite these tragedies and setbacks, the group managed to finish planning and experience both trips.

It is entirely possible that these events played a part in cementing many people's desire to realize their dreams of doing these trips, perhaps to the point that it became more important to complete the ski trip, *without significant modification to the original objective of reaching Banff.* During her post-interview, Paula mentioned that the trips seemed to take on a "higher purpose" because of Kathlene's death. There were a number of members who were frustrated, and even angered, about the circumstances of the letter sent by the outdoor professional. They felt betrayed by the individual and more than one expressed a sentiment similar to this member's journal entry: "I would like to make it to Banff to stick it in the face of the people who said we couldn't make it... (participant journal).

It is difficult to engage in conjecture on "what may have been," but without some of these external influences, those people who were inclined to question the push for mileage at the expense of other experiences while on the ski trip may well have found voice a little earlier. Paula provides an excellent example:

> Had a moonlight talk last night, I really like those. I care about what the group wants, so in that I care that we make it to Banff, but I really don't give a flip whether we make it to Banff. I care that we don't give up and go home, I care that we are learning and having fun, I care that I am away from civilization (so to speak) for this long, but I don't care about some dot on the map called Banff (journal entry, day 14).

Paula's journal entry is significant here because she, along with all the others, restated her goal of reaching Banff the night before. The group as a whole may also not have been so bent on trying to accomplish something they could not easily rationalize. However, I feel obligated to provide a context in which the group embarked on their first trip and without wishing to subject myself to "what if's" in regard to the outcome in the research, I am nonetheless left to wonder how the ski trip may have been different in more normal circumstances.

1.4 the positive spin

It is perhaps necessary to leave this part of the discussion by attempting to dispel the perception that I feel has been building so far, namely that the ski trip was a complete disaster for learning and creating attachment to place. Many sentiments expressed by people during and after the trip were overwhelmingly positive. There were significant positive experiences like the one Paula revealed in a poem about crossing an unnamed pass:

I have been to the most beautiful place in the world
where the wind's icy fingers wrap around my brittle bones.
Where night creeps dangerously and I stand undaunted.
In an unnamed pass, with my life in the mountain's palm
I too become unnamed.
A whisper in the wind, I fly back to where
I have come, only to tell stories

> of the most beautiful place in the world.
>
> (Paula's journal, Day 12).

Paula did not waver during the course of the trip. The following are representative of her many entries on the subject: "Yahe Weha, I have become. Beyond my wildest dreams I am loving this land" (Day 18); and "General excitement for life. As Damian puts it - not wanting to be anywhere else but here" (Day 30).

In recalling the end of the ski trip, Damian remembered the importance of the thirty day process we had just experienced. In the following excerpt from his post-interview, I reminded Damian about the goal he set before we left on the trips, his desire to "keep in mind that it's the experience - not 'when are we going to get there,' but what happens along the way. It's not just going from A to B." I then asked him whether he felt he met his goal. He replied:

> Oh, yeah. Absolutely. Because as goal-oriented as the ski trip was, getting [from A] to B. I mean, there's things along the way that - during that 30 days, there's no other way I would have learned. And the experiences along the way were incredible. On the sea kayak trip I was thinking, "I've never laughed this hard in sooo long." I mean, we had some funny stuff, where I was holding my gut and I could not honestly remember laughing that hard in quite a while. And, so that was great. So, those are the kind of experiences I look back upon. And the ski trip was very similar. Like, just the stuff we'd do together was great.

It is clear from Damian's and Paula's comments, as well as from so many of the recollections and memories of the others that there was indeed a great deal of social activity and that some of the ski trip itself was positive for them. Such a statement might seem counter to the analysis I am presenting here, but it is important to remember that the study is a critical one in that it sought to expose oppressive aspects of the outdoor education culture and to reach some sort of resolution of these matters. Explorations '96 members overcame some of these problems and I believe that, in order to do so, they would need to have some positive experiences on which to build. The tendency to suppress negativity may also have played a role along with the desire to remember positive elements of an adventure travel experience for which one has planned for so long. The fact that we laughed often and hard should not invalidate other aspects of my analysis. It is an easy task to report explicit events; however, as an analysis of the more implicit features of our experiences on trail has revealed, there were both internally and externally imposed barriers that prevented us from reaching a point that would facilitate a more profound connection to the places on the ski trip. A comparison of the sea kayaking trip and the changes that were made as a direct result of the ski trip lends credibility to such a claim. Damian recognized some of this in his comment above when he observed that, "there's no other way I would have learned" (post-interview).

2. conscientized travel

Becoming aware of the shortcomings of point-to-point travel and questioning the concept of reaching a destination as the raison d'etre for being out in nature challenged us and allowed us to begin the process of connecting to Place. For the members of Explorations '96, the process began with some reflection on the opportunities missed during the ski trip and some expressed feelings among participants that there was a gap between potential and realization. From the series of events discussed below through the sea kayak trip, we found ourselves treating place as more whole. We learned that social and cultural connections served to deepen our relationship to the land and our trips began to become more than merely covering ground. Some participants reported feeling that time had been broadened by historical accounts of an area; some spoke of how much residents and other travellers added to our own understanding of places. In general, we began to think of place as connected to more than just our corporeal selves who were travelling in absence of history and isolated from others. More than any other learning, this recognition of place as a concept beyond (but also inclusive of) the immediate self would prove to be the agent that would, for some, gel a conscientized perspective on travel in nature. For us, it began with a critique of our own experiences.

2.1 becoming critical travellers

A series of events that led to a breakthrough in the reflexive, critical portion of my research began with a question from Damian. On one of the two days that we travelled along the cut-line, he asked me if I could explain deep ecology to him. Both Paula and Mary became interested in the conversation, and we had a discussion about environmental thought that night which centred around deep ecology. In the next few days, a few people began reading a book about Naess' life and it spurred some reflection about their own relationships to the land. Mel and Paula both wrote about Naess in their journals. Paula seemed inspired and Mel was looking forward to meeting him:

> Ahh, I'm sooo excited to meet Arne. He proposes - in an ever-changing theory - eight tenets of Deep Ecology.... He believes that all life is a balance of richness and diversity. Richness is abundance. Humans are rich because our excessive population. Diversity is how many species are there on earth, for example. There must be a balance. It is an ecosophy, not a movement. It is a personal theory, not a dogma. WOW, must learn more (Mel's journal, Day 17).

The point in Mel's journal entry is not how exact she is in her interpretation of deep ecology as Naess understands it, but that she became interested in pursuing these thoughts further. Her comments on Pipestone Pass, recorded in my field notes, reveal that she did indeed begin to think about her place in these mountains:

> Today we climbed Pipestone Pass. We were seated on our packs at the top of the pass after having successfully crossed a somewhat tense slope. It was a beautiful day, one of those post-card type days that allowed us to see forever. We could see down the entire length of the valley we had climbed and surrounding us were snow-covered ridges and peaks. There were several comments on how beautiful this view was. Someone even said, "This is the most beautiful place on earth." Quite a few photos were taken of people coming up the last stretch of the pass as well as some group photos at the top. Conversation turned to more ordinary things at lunch ("Pass the peanut butter") once the excitement had finished its initial rush. After a few moments of silence, Mel started talking about how she and her tent mates read last night from Is it painful to think? She mentioned how Naess had at one time been a peak bagger, having to reach the summit no matter

> what. Then she asked, "I wonder what Deep Ecology would say about our trip? Are we route bagging?" There was silence and no one really answered her. After 30 seconds or so, Anne said that it sounded like people wanted more of an experiential trip for sea kayaking. I asked Mel if she had been thinking about that since last night. She replied with a chuckle that she had been thinking about it "since now" (March 24).

I completed that entry in my field notes with the following:

> This was an incredible breakthrough for me. This has been the first direct comment toward this type of goal/objective from a wilderness trip. I wonder if it is important to go through a phase of peak/trip/route bagging in order to move to a "deeper" way of travel? (March 24).

This was indeed momentous insofar as my research was concerned. Although I would come to find out later, through journals and post-interviews, that some members were questioning the publicly expressed goal of reaching Banff and its requisite push for daily mileage earlier than this day, Mel was the first to verbalize the connection between our style of travel and "route bagging." In any event, there is little doubt that the experiences on the ski trip had a significant impact on the way the group organized our travel for the sea kayaking trip.

2.2 becoming cultural travellers

There were planned and unplanned cultural learnings on both the ski trip and the sea kayaking trip. On the ski trip there were two major cultural encounters, both having very positive effects on the meaning of members' experiences. The first was a project undertaken by one of the participants to research and tell the cultural history from the perspective of travel literature of the area we were to travel through. Mel, the member who took on this project, looked for a way to ensure that the stories of these historical figures and their connections to the land became part of our everyday experiences. She settled on laminating type-written pages to the back of our topographic maps and attempted to match the various stories with maps that represented the areas spoken of in the written accounts. The effect this had on the group was spectacular. The stories were read at lunch stops and rest breaks, and in part because we could relate the words of other peoples' trials and epiphanies to the very visible landscape we found ourselves in, their experiences became part of our experiences. Their mishaps and achievements became part of our everyday conversations, part of our group's trip culture. In a sense, we began to see the landscape as broadened by time. A few members spoke of feeling the presence or the spirits of those who had come before us as we travelled (field notes, March 29). For some, knowing the experiences of others in another time provided an interesting comparison to our own travels, serving to connect our larger sense of humanity to a landscape that was virtually devoid of this aspect in concrete, day-to-day terms.

The second cultural encounter of significance took place at Skoki Lodge, a small and rustic backcountry chalet we stopped at about a week before the end of the trip. All of the members became engrossed by photographs on the wall of the lodge, giving faces to some of the people about whom we had read and come to know through story and legend. We also met an extremely friendly group of people staying at the lodge who became interested in us and our adventure. Most of us found ourselves at some point in conversation with one or more of "The Hinton Folks," as we came to call them, gaining knowledge of the area from their travels in it and trading skiing stories. Similarly, we managed to make connections with the staff at the lodge, Walter and Lara, who seemed to enjoy our company as much as we did theirs. A number of our group were pleased with Lara's pronouncement that we had "bush-joy" (field notes, March 28). Lara explained bush-joy to be a happiness that is expressed through a laughter that is real, that comes from "the source." This small act had a lasting effect on some members as they commented on Lara's perception of our group well into the sea kayaking trip. Her comments seemed to encourage a desire in some members to be happy.

By far the most profound encounter at Skoki, at least in terms of the group's connection to place is concerned, was meeting Ken Jones. He was an 85-year old man who was involved in the very early days of Skoki Lodge, one of the young men hired in the late 1920's and early 1930's to ferry loads of food and supplies between Lake Louise and the lodge. Two of our members met him on the afternoon of our second day at the lodge and he promised to come by after supper and talk about the early days. Every one of us made the trip from our campsite to the lodge later that night to listen to him and he proved to be one of the highlights of the ski trip for a few people. He was written about in all the personal journals I received after Explorations and I recorded comments about him from virtually everyone on the trip. Paula made this observation:

> Two memories stick out of how he views himself. Firstly he says he inherited the gypsy side of his mother and thus always must move around. It makes me feel comfortable with myself to know that there [are] other spirits with wind on their tails too. ...The second perception that sparked my interest is that he knows this land so well but what keeps him going is that there is still so much more to know. He defines beyond words how strong a love for something can be. He dedicated his life for this, to be an unpaid water carrier instead of all the recognition and respect that come with dedication in the city, and thus in return he is a legend in my eyes (Paula's journal, Day 24).

Mel was equally struck by the man and his own relation to place. Ken seemed to make the cultural history she had been researching come alive for her:

> Tonight we went back for story time with Ken Jones. Oh, it was incredible to hear him talk about the area in the early 1900's and all the people, like Sam Evans, Lizzie Rummel, Ehrling Strom, Catherine and Peter White, Earl Spencer, Mary Schaffer, Mary Vaux, and Joe Weiss. We got it on tape, so I should get details from Bailey (Mel's journal, Day 24).

And in her journal, Anne also found a connection to Ken Jones, and through him to the places that he knew so well:

> To think that Ken Jones hauled food and supplies for $1 a day and guided for years in these mountains and still comes back is so inspiring. And that he is so humble is what I admired the most. He seems to be here because he loves it. What are we here for? To say we did J-B [Jasper-Banff]? To experience? To

> learn? To live? He appeared to have an intrinsic love for this area - like it is not something to conquer or do. It was an honour to be able to hear his stories (Anne's journal, March 28).

The social contact we had with people, both historical and contemporary, enhanced our feelings for the travel experience. From the observations above, it became obvious to me that there was much to be gained from contact with others on extended backcountry trips. The following excerpt from Damian's post-interview clearly indicates that, for him, a sense of closure was not forthcoming at the end of the ski trip. He found it difficult to form the words that would adequately express his feelings about the last day of the ski trip, but it is evident that Damian was not able to completely connect to the ski trip as a whole experience.

> Um, yeah, I kind of found a sense of accomplishment at the end, a bit of disappointment at the end. When we got to [Mount] Norquay, we reached our goal, you know, [I thought] "Wow, I can't believe we're here; this is incredible." But I kind of thought, "Oh, shit, this is over. I'm going to have to go home now." So, I felt this slight disappointment about that. Like, basically I didn't - it was very different because getting there was almost like winning - you know, a sense of accomplishment. But usually, whenever I've won something in another scenario, it's like one great happy - that's it. This was like way different. It was like, "Hmmmm, not as good as I thought." It wasn't the winning - it wasn't winning - exactly, that was exactly it. It wasn't winning something. It was getting there, "Wow, super happy we're there. We did it, this is spectacular!" But there

> was this thing in the back of my mind saying, "Oh, we just have to go home" which is really too bad. I remember feeling that when we were getting our picture taken by those two girls. We're out here, were taking a picture, we're actually in Norquay. And I was just like, "Ahhh, this is not something that I expected" - not the kind of feeling I expected - kind of disappointed. I can't say disappointed; disappointed would be a little strong, but I was just - it was awkward, how about that (post-interview)?

Despite having achieved his goal of reaching Banff, Damian was decidedly ambivalent about the success of the trip. For him, there was an unarticulated something that was missing from his experience. This becomes significant in light of the fact that Banff as a final destination was paramount in the group's stated objective during the trip. I missed the opportunity to question him further on his ambivalence, but there is undoubtedly something antithetical to a sense of accomplishment that comes at the expense of connecting to a higher gestalt. Indeed it seems to be the case that the desire to see it all - or for that matter reach it all - cannot be considered the defining experience in our attempts to connect with places. Mel recognized this when she reflected on the top of Pipestone Pass just as Damian seems to have struggled with the concept here. I am left to wonder if the disappointing experience of "route bagging" is a necessary one before we are able to see the potential of a less driven, more connective approach to travel. In the end, the members of Explorations '96 were able to take some steps in this direction.

2.3 consciously making change

Without question, the experiences on the ski trip influenced the decisions the group made for the way we travelled on the sea kayaking trip. The entire group was reunited at Two O'clock Creek (the approximate half-way point of the ski trip) for a re-supply and garbage drop and another meeting was held to finalize plans for the upcoming sea kayak trip. Every single person voiced a desire to experience a different pace of travel, one that would not require such a daily push for mileage. As well, in revising the goals for the sea kayaking trip, Paula commented that she wanted to seek out more cultural contact in Haida Gwaii and we even discussed being more open to visitors and visiting others in the backcountry.

A comparison of two reflections for Mel - one during the ski trip and one during the sea kayaking trip - demonstrates to some extent the degree to which she had re-evaluated her stance on the potential for a slower and more inclusive kind of travel:

> Pipestone Pass today. Ohhh, what a beautiful, beautiful pass. It's about 10 kilometres long. We camped out at the base and then did the whole thing in one shot. Last night when we read Arne, he said he was a peak bagger in his younger years, but he's since changed his ways. Ohhhh, I want to bag this route at the expense of everything. Why, why, why? Is it social benefits, is it physical, monetary, padding my resume? All of the major routes it seems that I want to do are routes to bag (Mel's journal, Day 20).

This was perhaps the genesis of some sincere reflection for Mel . This reflective process carried on for Mel to the extent that she began to think seriously about a very different way to travel. Skiing alongside Mel one day on the cut-line, we talked about trips that we would love to do one day. I mentioned to her that my dream trip would be placing my canoe on a body of water in Northern Ontario in the Spring and making my way, without maps, from community to community until just before freeze-up. She acknowledged me, but did not show any excitement at the prospect. Much later, on the sea kayak trip, I came to find out why:

> We were standing around the fire today when Mel said, more or less out of the blue, "You know [Brent], I understand your desire to do that trip now." She was referring to my no-map, wandering canoe trip in Northern Ontario. When you first told me about it I thought, 'OK, sounds a bit like a snoozer' but after experiencing this trip, I think it's a neat idea." She said that she had never had the chance to experience a trip with the main objective as wandering (field notes, May 17).

Mel's comments here lend support to the notion that the culture of outdoor education teaches a hidden curriculum of destination oriented corridor travel. Perhaps one of the reasons that many of us need to work our way through this phase of conquering the landscape is that we are not generally exposed to trips that have no destination - or at least a less well defined end point, either in time or space. Recall the meeting at Two O'clock Creek that dealt with making some decisions for the sea kayaking trip. Every group member felt that it was important to reduce the amount of time spent in necessary travel. Yet, even though Anne had provided much of the drive for a different tone of travel for the sea kayaking trip, she also found it difficult to accept that travel was something other than all-day movement:

> While on the water, I overheard a remark from Anne commenting on how different this was than the ski trip. It was "strange" to paddle for an hour and that be all for the day. She ended by saying that she guessed that it had to be this way because of the weather conditions (field notes, May 11).

Anne received some support for her interpretation by Paula and Mary, but these three were not the only ones who needed time to adjust to a somewhat different travel reality. As it turned out, we were able to walk across a land bridge during low tide to another island. Some of us collected mussels for supper and we all engaged in a debate at one point about the ethics of doing so; two people returned to the same rocks at the next low tide with an interpretive book to identify marine wildlife; Will spent some time taking photos; and several people went with Al (our instructor/guide for the first week of the trip) to inspect the burial mounds. The time spent wandering among the rocks of the intertidal zone on that island was the first among many hours - and sometimes - days that were spent engaged in something other than covering distance and we began to learn that exploring would become one of our favourite activities of the trip. What that experience seemed to teach us was to begin looking at the areas we passed through a little more closely. As the trip progressed, it became almost a matter of course to wander through forests, comb the beaches or to explore the shoreline looking for marine life.

We began to learn and accept a rather different and more relaxed pace of travel on the sea kayaking trip and we found that the additional time allowed for a reflective connection to the area. At one point, we found ourselves windbound (unable to paddle due to high winds and large waves) on a point of land that had a small cabin, a very rough picnic table and a fire ring that showed signs of neglect and abuse. From the perspective of a group seeking pristine wilderness, the setting could have been quite disappointing. However, the group found great delight in reading a log book that held the comments and stories of people who had stayed and used the cabin over the past few years. Perhaps the key to recognizing their willingness to try and connect to the culture of this part of nature was best expressed when several members of the group sought to find their place in the history of the area by donating their labour for site improvement:

> Later that afternoon, Damian came out from the small cabin (a few were hanging out in there writing, painting and reading) and told us that the group inside the cabin had come up with the idea that we could "contribute to the place" by reconstructing the fire pit and protect some nearby tree roots. Mel, Bailey and I became involved and we ended up not only re-doing the fire pit, but also shoring up the rough hewn table and re-setting the benches around the fire ring. The job took some time and people seemed pleased with the quality of their work when we had finished.

All of this is not to say that changing the social conditions and style of travel can easily or permanently eradicate the destination oriented travel culture that has been embedded in our experiences for so long. We still had destinations in mind, and places to visit that were high on people's priority. Perhaps what we had done best in planning for the sea kayak trip was to give ourselves enough time to reach most of these places and spend a significant amount of time at each one. The fact that the trip was a loop of sorts also left us with the option of being able to turn around at any point if we felt pressured for time. We managed to reach most of our destination objectives, but there were a few that were not realized. On one occasion, everyone except myself had opted to hike from our campsite to Mount Yatza, a commitment that would take an entire day. The promise of this hike and the opportunity for gaining a panoramic view from altitude held much excitement for the group, but on the designated day, the weather was windy and wet. I recorded the following entry:

> By the time I had woken up and made my way down to the kitchen site, the group was busy packing day bags for the hike to Yatza. When I had asked Damian earlier if everyone was going, I was surprised to find that indeed they were. I made myself a hot drink and helped a little, but mostly watched the proceedings. The wind was up and made the cold, damp air unpleasant to face. The group was seemingly quite intent on the process of leaving and packing. Questions went back and forth about taking first aid kits, who had what gear and whether they should take the radio or leave it here. Eventually all the boats were carried close to the water [there was a short paddle to reach the hike's starting point] and there was only a matter of getting in and pushing off when Anne said something like,"We may be about to embark on our stupidest idea yet." She later reported that when she said that, everyone stopped what they were doing. Within two minutes, the group decided en masse not to go (field journal, June 4).

It is not an easy task to let go of that which is so ingrained in us, but what did strike me in recording this event was that the group members *did* re-evaluate a destination goal. My entry continued as follows:

> In my view, it was a wise decision [not to go] that allowed the *conditions* to play some role in *activity* (original emphasis). It makes more sense to me in developing place and a feel for place to do that. I am a bit surprised they went as far as they did before changing their objective for the day, but I'm glad that they could do that, that is, re-evaluate on the very edge of leaving. They have allowed themselves to be flexible, to not let pre-set objectives be over-arching and dominant (field journal, June 4).

2.4 connecting our meaning to others' places

As previously mentioned, in planning this second trip, there was general agreement that we did not want to travel in the same way as on the ski trip - with little time for anything but covering ground. Shortly into the sea kayak trip, we had a meeting to decide what kinds of experiences and what learning we wished to accomplish on the sea kayaking trip. We generated an ambitious list, including three days for "some sort of socio-cultural education/contact" (Paula in field notes, May 14) with the people who lived on the islands. Support for this time to be spent somewhere other than strictly out on trail in direct contact with nature was unanimous. To that end, at the end of our time in the Queen Charlotte Islands, our group chose to spend three days in the peopled, "urban" parts of the islands. We spent our days hitchhiking back and forth between

Skidegate and Queen Charlotte City. Six people also made their way up to Masset, a northern port about three or four hours' drive from where we were camped. This time proved to invaluable in coming to a greater understanding of how we, as visitors, related to a land that others called home. These short few days contributed in no small way to how we constructed the meaning of this place for us and provided an important link in how this understanding we carried fit with the larger mosaic of what was already there.

Surprisingly enough, but also very clearly demonstrated in journals and in my own field notes, hitchiking proved to be an extremely connective experience for most of the participants. One Explorations member met the author of an interpretive book that we had taken along on the trip. Another participant met one of the people who had spent some time restoring totem poles at Skung Gwaii, a local Native man who took the time to show pictures of the process. Virtually every trip into Queen Charlotte City made for a story from each two-person hitchiking team when the members of Explorations met up on either side of the ride. The people who picked us up were a rich source of information on local culture and history and we found ourselves helped by more than a few of them. One ride up to Masset led to a place to stay on the beach for the entire group. While this was perhaps not beyond the bounds of what other hitchhikers experience in their travels, it becomes significant in the group members' attachment to place. All of the participants who shared their journals with me at the end of the program treated this as an extremely positive event. In Anne's words:

> I was so excited to meet the author of the books that were a gateway to the history of the Charlottes for me. She's about 77 years old, wrote the first edition over 40

> years ago. AAAHHH! I can't believe I met this woman!!!!! She was so sharp, intuitive, chatty and humble about her books. It rocked my day (June 12).

These social encounters were powerfully connective in each of the members' constructions of our time in the Queen Charlottes. Paula was inspired to seek the tie between the past and the present from what she learned reading a book on trail and from meeting a descendant of the figures in that book:

> It's about 24 hours until we catch the ferry for Prince Rupert, this is tearing me up inside, I'm really going to miss this place. I might even be going a little crazy because I was talking to the totem pole by the longhouse. Charlie Gladstone carved it, he's a descendant of the Edenshaw lineage. I went searching for Edenshaw gravestones in the Masset cemetery today, but sadly couldn't find any. They must be buried in an Old Masset cemetery (June 13).

Aside from the trip to Masset, time spent in Queen Charlotte City and seeking out local artisans, most of the group chose to re-visit the local museum in Skidegate. This enhanced meaning of place through travel is evident in a comment made when Anne reflected on the ties between her experience and the local history that existed before us. At this point, her understanding of place became a much more integrated whole:

> The museum was so much more interesting after being here for five and a half weeks. I went over everything with so much more of a background. The totem pole carvings were familiar and their sense of history was so tangible" (Anne's journal, June 14).

What remains rather interesting is that the sea kayaking trip was far and away a more cultural experience and less pristine in terms of undisturbed nature. We encountered more people, more garbage and more environmental destruction (i.e., clearcut logging) than at any time on the ski trip. Yet both the explicit comments and the implicit behaviour of the Explorations members indicated that the connection to place, as a whole, was stronger on the sea kayaking trip than on the ski trip. When I asked the participants in post interviews if they saw a map of the Queen Charlotte Islands in a different light after having been there, the response was a unanimous "yes." However, there was a degree of ambivalence about the same question for looking at a map of the ski trip. One member did not seem to feel a connection to the mountains (ski trip) as a whole, but did feel a more complete attachment to the Queen Charlottes. Another felt more closure from the sea kayak trip than the ski trip, partially because of the three days around Skidegate and Queen Charlotte City. Others had some difficulty in deciding if, in fact, they could visualize a map of the ski trip on the same connective level as a map of Haida Gwaii.

While the two trips are incomparable in so many ways, the propensity of the participants to connect social events and meaning to a construction of place meant that the sea kayak trip provided us with more opportunities to connect travel pathways in the Queen Charlottes and therefore allowed us to visualize the trip as a more contiguous event than the blur of (albeit spectacular) visual landscape images that seemed to make up the ski trip.[4] Perhaps on a more conscious level than anyone else, Paula wove together culture and nature in a short journal entry that recognizes the notion that both may need consideration to form a more complete sense of Place:

> I have felt so welcome here to make this place my own. I figure two parties have helped this, the people and the animals. The people never treated us like tourists they didn't want around. They invited us into their cars and homes with genuine interest in who we are. The animals too didn't seem to mind having us around, the seals would check up on us and the deer would feel free to wander through our campsite (June 13).

Paula's journal entry brought together humanity with the rest of nature in a way that retained respect for the wildness of the life in Haida Gwaii.

It is difficult to settle on any conclusive lessons from the comparison of these two trips. There are too many large and small events that influenced the tone and feel of each trip. And I would resist an implication that truly "wild" places are not even necessary for human connection to place. All places are different and we should treat them as different, but connected. However, what can be said is that we did a better job of connecting "the human" to "the nature" we travelled through in Haida Gwaii. Perhaps there were more opportunities to do this in such a culturally rich area, but I am quite confident that our efforts in this regard could have been improved for the ski trip. As well, we could have taken more time to connect to other, non-human aspects of the landscape (e.g., conducting snow studies or taking time to follow animal tracks), but we quite clearly chose the destination of Banff as the goal for the ski trip.

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[4] I recognize, of course, the problems inherent in such a claim. For example, the delay in time between the post interviews and the ski trip could easily have affected the connection to place in attempting to recall the details of the travel pathways on the ski trip; the sea kayaking trip was a much more recent experience at the time of the interview.

3. a sense of home

As part of their connection to places, the Explorations members were confronted with the concept of "home" as a connective force and as an anchor for distinguishing between and among places. The most common and most powerful struggle in their attempts to reconcile these seemingly disparate notions of home involved the ideas of home as part of their urban existences versus "being at home" in nature. However, other reflective efforts were directed to connecting their own understanding of home to the homes of others, and even just coming to terms with the meaning that "home" had for themselves.

The meaning of home is elusive; it is a term that is meant to apply to all of our different everyday life situations. While the existence of the concept of "home" may be more or less universal, the diversity of our daily lives demands that the underlying meaning of home be flexible, almost malleable. To a certain extent, the same was true of Explorations members. It was not surprising that there was some significant differences in the way that each participant characterized what it meant for them to be (at) home. For the most part, those who had experienced years of living in one place reported some degree of rootedness as defining their ideas of home. On the other hand, those who had moved a number of times, changing their geographies - consistently if not constantly - in their youth did not describe a feeling of home with reference to any type of rootedness.

3.1 home as socially organized

The one thread that did tie together all descriptions was the idea that home must involve some sort of social element. This social characteristic overrode any and all criteria for calling a place home. For example, when I asked Mary, who had lived eighteen of her twenty years in Sherwood Park, how a move after such a long residence in one place had affected her she replied, "It wasn't a big deal at all. It just made everything easier." Granted a move from Sherwood Park to Edmonton could scarcely be considered a major shift in personal geography, but Mary made it clear that the important reasons for the ease in her move were indeed social:

> Just because there was nothing left for us in Sherwood Park. I had finished school, and my dad works in Edmonton, and my brother was going to the University of Alberta, and we have no family out there, and all our friends moved away.

It is clear that Mary's main reference points in constructing her primary residence are social. In fact, Mary did not feel that any particular physical place was home. She expressed a fear of stagnating in place and when pressed she could only attach herself to one anchor - her family:

> And I don't know if I would want home to feel (pause) anyplace. I think Edmonton will always be home because home is where my family is - to me. So,

> it really didn't matter where we lived. It'd probably be where my mom and dad are.

As could be expected, family was central to most participants in their feelings of home. For Will, the close ties in his family rivals his desire to move elsewhere and pursue his chosen career in the outdoors.

> Actually, I thought about living in Edmonton for different reasons. Like my whole family lives here, and everyone that's in my family that's gotten married still lives here. And then our family's quite close. Every Sunday we always get together as a family, and have dinner, and just kind of talk and hang out. And that's just kind of become a tradition. Every Sunday we have dinner at my place, and everyone comes over. And, you know, I thought that if I moved away, then I wouldn't do that. So, actually the thought of moving away for that reason kind of keeps - like, that's one of the reasons I'd like to stay around Edmonton, is because of my family all being based here.

Although family was central to several participants, it did not always provide all that was necessary in a complete picture of home. While keeping the social focus, Bailey broadened the circle to include friends: "But this is also where I know. I've got some friends who have moved to different places, but this is where I see people." In the description of her home feeling, Cynthia stepped beyond merely including friends to illustrate how the role of parental location can begin to slip from its central position. According to Cynthia, her parents tell her that home is where family is - and she agrees with them "to a certain extent" - but maintains that "my friends keep me in Edmonton." Anne concurred:

> But the house that I live in now, that I've been living in since January. And that house definitely feels like home. Like, I'll go and visit my parents - I go and visit my parents, and I can't wait to get home, back here. I definitely have a feeling for, not Edmonton, but for what I think of as the U of A community. So, the campus, my house, my neighbourhood, this whole area, you know 109th, Whyte Ave, and the river valley. Like to me, that's Edmonton. When I go and visit [my aunt and uncle] - I mean they're in the west end so that's not Edmonton. I can't imagine living out there because that's just not - that's not - my city (laughs).

3.2 home and comfort

Anne demonstrates for us the difficulty in attempting to extend the concept of home beyond what we know well, the people we see most often and areas we frequent and in which we feel comfortable. Edmonton, as a larger backdrop for her perceived community, has become an abstracted concept that does not fit smoothly with who she is or in her day-to-day events and experiences. The larger context should be expected to become less familiar and more abstract, but in Anne's case, her immediate community seems disconnected from the rest of the city - to the extent that it has become difficult for her to perceive other communities as part of the city in which she lives.

Among the options available to us in interpreting the meaning of Anne's experiences is the possibility that we are unable, in any substantive way, to connect to that which is outside of the immediate circle of concrete, everyday life. What is more likely, however, is that we choose to separate ourselves from that which does not immediately affect us. I make this claim based on two foundations of reasoning: the isolationist perspective that is fostered by current society and how we choose to zoom past the homeless and disadvantaged on our everyday travel pathways to work - we choose the goal of conquering the economic heights just like conquering a route or a peak....(the urban solo attempted to delve into this to some degree and was mildly successful) and second, because if we did attempt to let the concrete flow smoothly back and forth with the abstract we would be forced to recognize many more inconsistencies in our treatment of others.

Other members also took up this conception of comfort. In the exchange below, while it would at first seem that Bailey is limiting himself to viewing home as somewhere to catch a nap, at a deeper level he is referring to the level of comfort and familiarity he has with specific places in his known world.

> Brent: What goes into the concept or the idea of feeling at home?
>
> Bailey: Well, it's sort of where - more or less where I have connections - I know where things are, I know how things work, if I want to just pass out [sleep] in an afternoon, I've got a place somewhere to go and do that, which could be anywhere; it could be at home, it could be some little cubbyholes I know in the U of A, there's some corners you can pass out, but you probably know the spots. It could be the lifeguard's office in the university, it could be a friend's house. But it's more or less where I could walk into.

This degree of comfort and familiarity with people and place(s) was integral to the development of the participants' construction of home. Will, living in Edmonton his entire 22 years, fingered this characteristic outright: "I think part of it is the familiarity of living in Alberta. You mentioned the Maritimes. If I moved to New Brunswick or Nova Scotia, I would be lost, I think, in regards to fitting in." When I proposed a hypothetical situation to Bailey about moving to Canmore to pursue a dream job, and asked him if he would feel at home right away, he responded with: "Uh, not quite yet. I'd have to work my way into it, and meet a few people and get to know a few things about the town first. But yeah, it wouldn't take long I don't think." Notwithstanding the variations among participants in their understandings of familiarity, the notion itself was a powerful force in creating feelings of home.

Included in this search for familiarity is the need to feel a social and cultural belonging. In the fall of 1995 I had arranged an interview time with Anne and we agreed to meet in the "grad lounge," a small room along the hallway among the graduate student study carrels in the Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation. The room serves as a lunch room and as a centre for day-to-day graduate student social activity. I was a few minutes late and found her waiting for me when I arrived. The degree to which this cultural belonging can either be a source of comfort or discomfort was revealed nicely during the interview. The experience of waiting for me in a room occupied by members of a slightly different sub-culture (i.e., graduate students) undoubtedly left her uncomfortable.

B: Do you feel at home wherever you go? Or are there places and times that you feel most at home?

A: Well, I didn't feel at home in the grad office (laughs).

B: Oh, like you mean when you were sitting there waiting for me?

A: Yeah, I was sitting there going, "I think some grad student's going to walk in going, "who is this person sitting in our home" (laughs). That's why when you guys walked in I kind of said, "Do you know where Brent is because I know I don't belong here (laughs). You're probably wondering who I am, eh?"

Anne evidently did not feel "at home" in spite of the fact that she had been in the grad lounge only two or three days prior to that when John, another graduate student, and myself were already there. In that situation, she appeared more than comfortable as was evidenced by her use of casual, familiar banter and relaxed posture. The next portion of our conversation reveals to what extent social elements can change the same physical space in its development as a constructed place.

B: You were in there the other day when you ran into me, you ran into John...

A: Then I felt at home.

B: That was OK? Because there were some people there you knew?

A: Yeah. Sure. Yeah, because you guys were all there and I knew you guys.

3.3 home as an extension of self

At the core of the concept of home is an ability to describe it as an extension of self. Feeling as though a home place is part of oneself appears to be much more than merely a metaphor for some. In his explanation of his own home space, Damian was quite direct in this regard:

> A home would be some place that would have to have parts of me in it. So, I consider my room very home-like because my room - I don't know if you've ever been down there - it's like taking over the basement. Anything I have in my room is mine and it's set up just the way I want it. That would be home.

That Damian would attach part of his identity to his personal space and possessions was not unusual. Mel and Bailey also both staked some of their home identity on personal possessions. Bailey saw home as a function of "where my resources are at, where all my stuff is, other than what I've got in my wallet." Mel underscores this point: "I've been living here for ten years, and that's where my room is, my bed is, my stuff. And if I leave [to go] somewhere, I always leave all my stuff there."

There is some evidence, however, that the extension of self in this way is not necessarily limited to one physical place. Having two or more attachments to place on the level of home was addressed directly by four participants. Mel spends almost four months of each year at a summer camp in Ontario. She considers herself, in a very real way, to be at home in both places when she compares her own criteria.

> OK. Yeah, I've grown up there, and I - it's the same thing. I come here [to Edmonton] in the winters, but I know that's temporary too, because I know every summer I go back there. I mean, I maybe don't leave as much of my physical stuff there, but in a sense I always leave a piece of me there and I have very much - maybe not biological family - but a social community and a family there as well.

Paula also had the experience of feeling at home in a resident camp, although she did not spend years developing the relationship. The reason for attaining that level was undoubtedly social - and specifically had to do with her emotional comfort with those around her.

> Well, I think it was the people around me too. When I first got there I didn't know anyone too well, so I didn't have anyone to really express myself with. And then eventually me and the girl I was staying with, we got closer and so I think that was a big part in it. So, yeah, a more comfortable feeling anyway.

This social comfort is significant. As Anne verbally works her way through her answer to the question of what makes her feel more at home, she ultimately lights upon comfort within place when she connects the ideas of emotional attachment and experiences she had within that place.

> Well, I think - I think I have to have experiences there, you know. I lived in an apartment with my sister. And that never felt like home because I never gained any sort of an emotional attachment with [the apartment]. There's something about a house that gives a sense of home. I guess a sense of belonging. Like, I know that I belong in the U of A community. And I was chatting about this with my sister saying we'd be graduating this year and what kinds of transitions we might go through when we leave, you know, the university environment. And this is a real sense of you know that you belong here, surrounded by all - I guess just a sense of comfort within the experiences, and an emotional kind of an attachment.

Will also keyed in on the significance of comfort:

> I mean, when you ask "What's a Canadian?" there's so many different people that live in Canada now that - it's hard to say, but - just being comfortable, for me, being wherever I am, helps make it feel more like home, I guess.

Paula adds to the strength of voices for comfort: "I guess you tell it by how comfortable you feel in that place or how much you can calm down."

4. home, comfort and nature

Where we tend to run into trouble as outdoor enthusiasts and educators is in how we construct the concept of home in the context of nature. I catalogued a variety of situations that quite obviously decreased the participants' feeling of home in natural settings. All had to do with one or both of two types of comfort - physical and affective. I became interested in how comfort levels affected the participants' feelings of being at home. This particular theme became stronger as the program progressed. My own observations in combination with comments from some members encouraged the conclusion that there is little difference in the importance of comfort in the backcountry or in urban settings with respect to the construction of home or place.

Unquestionably, the easier of the two to identify was physical discomfort and the task was made even simpler by the weather on the ski trip. Upon completion of the trip we learned that the area had just been subjected to the coldest March in the past one hundred years. With a majority of our nights spent at minus 25 degrees Celsius or colder, physical discomfort was obvious in all of us. Long days of hard skiing and heavy packs in deep snow added to this phenomenon. The second type, affective comfort, was not as readily identified, but it was at least as significant in the participants' attempts to connect to place.

4.1 physical comfort

Physical comfort is more often and more easily compromised when we are exposed to the elements. As members of an outdoor culture, we expect some discomfort in natural settings and on outdoor expeditions; we even prudently teach our students in outdoor education to mitigate the effects of severe weather. However, at least for this group of students, when physical discomfort resulted from environmental factors, the romantic connection to nature as home lessened and, in some cases, seemed to be almost severed. My first clue of this was early in the ski trip; I recorded in my field notes how we were all performing in the unseasonably cold temperatures (averaging -30 degrees C at night and reaching approximately -15 degrees C during the day):

> It has been slow going. We wake up but stay in our [sleeping] bags; just boiling water for breakfast takes between 1/2 an hour and 45 minutes. Manipulating stoves and packing packs just can't be that efficient with hands bunched up inside our mitts. And we all dread and complain about putting on boots that are at the same temperature as the early morning air - minus 30 I think (field notes, March 7).

The dramatic effect that the cold weather had on each of us became one focus in my analysis out on trail. Besides physical signs of discomfort, I noticed that conversations would, on an abstract level, attempt to shift us in time and/or space, purposefully disconnecting ourselves from the here and now. An excerpt from my field notes reveals my early reflections:

> In times of duress and harsh conditions, feeling at home in the moment does not seem to exist. Talk and thoughts move in time and space (e.g., "in summer, this would be hot" or "I think we should sea kayak in Baja, in Mexico" or " I could be taking a hot bath right now"). Comfort and feelings of belonging seem to change under these conditions. Perhaps this too can all become part of what home means, but not in the way most people refer to it (field notes, March 8).

In reviewing my interview notes, I later realized that Mary had pointed the way even before we went out into the field. During a pre-interview, Mary was reflecting on past outdoor experiences to answer my questions:

> B: So, what makes a place home?
>
> M: So what makes a place home? Well, let me tell you (laughing). No, I'm not sure, actually. I don't know. Like when I was paddling on the river this summer with kids, that felt like where I belonged, but.... when it wasn't raining, it felt like it (laughing).
>
> B: (laughing) Then it felt like you wanted to go home.
>
> M: Yeah, dry, someplace dry.

Mary was not the only one to go through this experience; virtually all of us at one time or another felt similarly. I wrote in my own journal on the sea kayak trip of no longer wanting to be on trail after five or six days of constant rain. Damian spoke for himself and perhaps a few others during his post-interview:

> After the ski trip we spent 30 days being bloody cold and... I think everybody on the trip rode this roller coaster thinking, "Oh, shit. I wish I could go home" at one point in time. Especially on the ski trip. "I wish I could go home. I hurt, this hurts, it's cold and I just don't want to be here." But other times I felt, "Wow, I'd rather be nowhere else." And I felt more [of] "I'd rather be nowhere else" than of the negative, of the "I want to go home" crap. And even the fall before - the August before [some friends and I] did that Kluane hike, up until then that was my longest backcountry experience. Even Kluane, for that 10 days - I had days where I thought, "Oh, shit, I just want to go home." And on the ski trip I had a couple of those times, but there were waaaay fewer. I had way more "Wow, I don't want to be at home - this is way neater than anything." And the sea kayak trip there was even less of that. I can't really remember that I really longed for home - except for when it rained that one morning. I just didn't want to get out of bed. But other than that I can't really remember a time that I wanted to be home. But in that respect, absolutely. Yeah. MmmmHmmm.

Damian was speaking to how much more comfortable he had begun to feel being outdoors after the extended trips of Explorations. But no matter how acclimatized he became, he inevitably ran into a situation that was discomforting and made him wish to "be somewhere else," specifically at home, a home that was less prone to physical discomfort, a home that felt more relaxing and welcoming. I have had a good deal more experience with extended backcountry trips than any of the Explorations members and I also had at least one period (as recorded in my journal, but probably one or two more brief trysts with "elsewhere-longing" if memory serves correctly) of wishing to be home. The point, of course, is that each of us who harboured these thoughts must have recognized the limited temporality of these backcountry experiences. We each knew that we were, at the end of it all, going home, a place where day-to-day comfort is more assured. In Mel's words, it is a place to which we *return*.

Again, none of this should be too surprising for outdoor educators who have spent any time with people in the backcountry. However, Mel brought this theme into better focus for me when she shared a story of her first night on the ski trip:

> I went and said hello to the mountains last night. I feel as though our relationship is quite neutral right now. I got the distinct impression that they didn't much care who I was, but that they'd rather just let me prove myself. Well, fair enough, I figure. That's really the makings of a more honest relationship anyways. And besides, I'm not too sure what I think of them yet either. We started reading Touching the void. Oi vey, what am I doing here. It's -30 and we still have a month to go. "In like a lion, out like a lamb". Come on, baby, we're countin' on ya (Mel's journal, Day 1).

However, perhaps the oblique connections between the concept of home and physical comfort pale in comparison to the rather direct reference given by Mel in her personal journal a few weeks later. She leaves no doubt in my mind about the link between physical comfort and connection to place:

> Fuck me! It's fucking cold again. Fuck! My feet are sooo sore, I'm sooo cold. This sucks. I don't want to go to sleep because my [sleeping] bag is a wet icy

> chunk. And if I sleep it means my next waking moments will be putting on frozen boots. Fuck. I want to go home (Mel's journal, Day 20).

Weather was not the only contributing factor in physical discomfort. Participants had to deal with the everyday discomforts of living and functioning in an environment that did not cater to luxury. Merely obeying the rhythms of bodily functions could prove to be an ordeal, especially for the women. Gary suffered from intestinal problems that finally forced him to leave the trip at the mid-point. Mel wrote of how the blisters on her feet inhibited her from doing all that she wished. But Paula intuitively recognized the connection between her physical discomfort and feelings of home. Although she did not fully examine her emotional reasoning, she was nonetheless extremely profound in her short assessment: "I hurt my knee today and it is making me homesick. I don't really understand that connection, but oh well" (Paula's journal, Day 15).

All of this speaks to the relationship that must exist for us between nature, self and h-home. The members of Explorations made it quite clear through their actions and in their journals that having a warm, relaxing, comfortable home to return to was a key component in their constructions of travel in nature. For them, and no doubt for others, this conception of h-home is at the concrete core of our everyday lives, one that cannot and should not be promoted as second-class to the “natural home” that we are taught to revere by the culture of outdoor education.

Frequently we encourage those we teach and trip with to connect to the natural world as home, and specifically as our "true" home. The message is repeated in much of the literature to which outdoor students are exposed. Mel expressed such a connection when she went to greet the mountains. That night in the parking lot Mel said that she felt she was "finally home again" (field journal, March 4). Her thoughts were echoed by Paula's journal entry for the same evening:

> Excitement!! Approximately -20. Walking around the parking lot track smiling at the moon. Feels good to be here, feels like home. I told my mother about the sense of place study and she said, "That's easy for you [Paula], any place with trees is your home." And she is right, somewhat... mmmm (journal entry, Day 1).

Although a mystical connection to nature is important for many, this abstracted level of relating to nature demonstrated by Mel and Paula exists as a romantic vision of nature as nurturing. And I would be one to staunchly defend the power of such a connection, but when a romantic construction does not allow us to incorporate or justify feelings of discomfort, the relationship becomes damaging. So, when these situations of discomfort arise, we are forcibly disengaged from our romantic abstraction of nature as home and often replace it with another - memories of comfort from our other homes, our urban homes, just as the participants have done in their times of discomfort. The concept of nature as the more real home is developed in outdoor education culture in a number of ways, but the general pattern of logic looks much like this:

Premise 1: Nature is what provides for our sustenance and maintains conditions for our continued existence on earth.

Conclusion 1: Nature is, therefore, of great value.

Premise 2: The built environment is harmful to natural processes.

Premise 3: "Home" is a concept of great value as the perceived source of comfort and belonging.

Premise 4: Humans are of nature.

Conclusion 2: Nature is, therefore, our true (and more valuable) home.

But reasoning like that above is problematic in attempting to create lasting relationships with the earth that do not leave our ethics rolled up with our tents and sleeping bags once a trip is over. There is a tension that exists in backcountry travellers when it comes to this return to nature as home. Damian alluded to it when he volunteered this sentiment: "And I felt more [of] 'I'd rather be nowhere else' than of the negative, of the 'I want to go home' crap." Damian's comment is significant for the value it gives the expectation of his experiences. For him, wanting to go home while out on trail is an attitude to be frowned upon, or at least to be overcome. What is not validated for Damian, and for so many others, is the desire to experience the uncomplicated, more familiar existence of self and home; that perspective is deemed to be "crap." Consistent exposure to backcountry travel can indeed normalize our interaction with free nature and subsequently increase our homeostatic level of comfort as Damian suggested some pages back, but the culture surrounding outdoor education too often develops a false, romantic picture of how we should feel during our time in the field. We expect ourselves to be happy and blissful in our experiences in nature, even when the empirical evidence of minus 30 degree temperatures seems to be suggesting a different conclusion.

We need to face up to the fact that outdoor experiences, while challenging, awe-inspiring, even spiritual, will be less comfortable than our other home realities (which are, by and large, situated in an urban context for most outdoor educators and students). This is not to say that challenge and elements of spirituality are not good for us, but that in times of decreased comfort we are reminded of the temporal nature of our backcountry experiences. If home is analogous - at least in part - to comfort for the Explorations participants, challenge is something else, not opposite, but different to our everyday constructions of home.

The romantic vision of outdoor life is often viewed from the comfort and insular existence of life in urban areas. This mindset can be framed in seeing the aesthetic beauty of a rain storm bending the view in front of us through a plate glass window or watching the blanket of white take over the landscape during a winter snow fall. However, the experience of trying to light a fire or stay warm in direct contact with those same conditions may create a dissonance with our romantic version of the natural world, and this experiential departure from our expectations seems to cause an internal conflict that is difficult to resolve given the logic of outdoor education's preferred relationship to nature. In this sense, the logic becomes one of separation rather than connection.[5] This is not to imply that the concrete experience should take too great a share in the development of our senses of place. Rather, if we recognize that there is a balance between the concrete and the abstract, the issue of importance becomes creating more consistency between these two. This is perhaps the dynamic to which Naess refers in an interview with Angus (1997):

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[5] The development of thought in a logic of separation on this page and the previous page was inspired by, and is a modification of, Karen Warren's "Logic of Domination."

Angus: You seem to use the term abstract as a criticism. Is your thinking tending to move away from the abstract and to the concrete?

Naess: No. It is an oscillation. The special nature of deep ecology is that there is always a connection between the ultimate premises - which are more or less abstract - and the concrete situation. Specific decisions always have a connection with the most fundamental values in your life.

The day-to-day experiences of our urban existences establish the plate glass encounter as real as feeling the trickle of rain entering an unprotected seam in our rain gear, but we tend to separate these realities instead of reconciling them as contiguous. The importance to be gleaned from an analysis of the relationship of nature and home, for our purposes, is the disappointment and disillusionment that can be set up through uncritical romantic visions of a natural home, what Fay (1987) would refer to as a false consciousness. Worse is when we encourage a moral displacement and devaluation of our urban existences in contrast with a supposedly morally superior existence in pristine surroundings. Feeling that we have finally managed to "come home" when we reach the backcountry proves unsustainable if it attempts to replace rather than augment our urban homes. This speaks to the need to maintain the self - and concomitantly, the home as our stable beginnings from which we strive for a connection to the Self and Home embodied in Self-realisation.

What would be preferable is to recognize the h-home of our more urban based existence and relate to our experiences in nature in the context of H-home. This means, of course, that the concrete existence is more closely tied to urban living, an existence that we have traditionally rejected for its abstract approach to forming a relationship with nature. However, if we take a social constructivist position, and I would argue that Naess' development of the relational field does not contradict this (see Naess, 1989), the reality of urban life cannot nor should not be denied; it is at the core of many of our everyday existences. In fact, despite our moralizing which places nature as the more concrete version of reality, *we often implicitly construct the urban version of home as more real*. This is revealed by the process of engaging our urban realities as desirable in times of discomfort while out in free nature. From a constructivist perspective, most of us can only achieve this "nature as the true reality" position by creating this reality as a disjointed and romantic abstraction, a somewhat dubious feat. In the face of how we tend to deal with comfort and a sense of belonging, this would seem to be a significant, but subjugated truth that requires some attention.

As evident as discomfort was in its ability to disconnect people from their connection to nature as home, feelings of comfort seemed to produce the opposite effect. After a very cold spell during the first week of the trip, the temperature warmed for a short time and we spent two days skiing in sunshine and daytime temperatures of approximately -5 degrees Celsius. The following entry from my field journal contrasts Mel's disposition with her earlier frustrations with cold weather:

> Weather is sunny and warm. Surrounded by small spruce trees, sparse enough to almost be considered open ground, Mel was dressed in a Lifa top, Lifa bottoms and Hawaiian shorts, eating a pure white snowball. The two of us were somewhere in the middle of the pack, with the others just up ahead around a

> corner or just behind, not quite in sight either. Mel stopped and said, "It seems almost magical here - I wouldn't want to be anywhere else" (field journal).

This was not the only time Mel's comfort increased her connection to place. When we arrived at Skoki Lodge toward the end of the trip, temperatures had dipped again and Mel recorded her own reaction to being inside next to a coal stove:

> Hellllooo luxury. Hello, hello, hello. I'm in heaven and I ain't leavin' until they physically throw me out. It's three p.m. and Anne and I have parked our asses at the luxurious Skoki Lodge. I'm right beside the coal stove and I'm soooo hot. Oh baby, oh baby, oh baby! There's refillable tea. Oh baby, oh baby, oh baby. I'm not leaving! I'm in my underwear and I smell bad. It would be great to work here (Mel's journal, Day 24).

Although she did not make an explicitly associate the two, Paula also found herself happy during times of warm weather when she wrote: "Can't wait for a rest day. This group is very fun - [I] kind of like it when everyone gets a little crazy. Love having Anne here. Oh, and it's warmed up! My English very poor. Me like this (journal entry, Day 22).

There are two interesting points to note from Paula's short entry above. First, it is quite clear that she was physically tired, but that this aspect was overidden by other feelings of comfort (i.e., she was warm and she was happy with the group). There is some evidence, then, to suggest that physical exertion does not have to lead to discomfort if other aspects of an experience are perceived as comfortable. Second, Paula's allusion to the state of the rest of the group (i.e., "a little crazy") suggests that others were also feeling lively at this point in the trip.

4.2 affective comfort

Physical comfort or discomfort was not the only measure of personal well-being that influenced the participants' sense of place. The degree of connection to place also seemed to revolve around the level of individual and group comfort in emotional ways, that is, in affective terms. Explorations members were most definitely swayed in their connection to place and to the rest of the group as a result of the stability of their affective states. Paula's entry above also speaks to her affective state when she described her happiness. She was moved to connect even deeper when the link between places was such that one reminded her of another:

> Mary, Mel and I were skiing along when we saw Will down this hill with an amazing looking gorge below it. Damian joined us and we went down. It was so amazing. Reminded me of Maligne Canyon - I loved that place as a kid. I love when places remind me of places I have been. I feel more comfortable, kinda at home kind of feeling. Even places that I have only been a short while feel at home when another place reminds me of them (journal entry, Day 10).

It would seem, then, that during times of comfort, we are more able to build the kinds of relationships that Paula speaks of in her entries above. However, support for such a position should also mean that affective discomfort should encourage a disconnection or at least introduce a barrier of sorts for deeper connection to place. I found this barrier much earlier in the project because of the stark contrasts that were provided between the participants' desire for a connection with the natural world and the more immediate concerns of day to day life. Evidence of doubt crept into Mel's feeling of place as early as the drive out to Jasper on the first day of the ski trip:

> I was borderline on the whole sanity thing on the way here. I kept getting tearful lumps in my throat, especially when we passed the park gates. OH MY GOD, what are we doing here?!! Somehow I remember coming up with this ridiculous idea and going to a lot of effort to convince everyone else that it was a good idea as well. They all seemed convinced, but I don't know if I am. What a fucking ridiculous thing to do. I miss my mom already! That's ridiculous - I'm almost 22 (journal entry, Day 0).

No doubt she was feeling some anxiety about the beginning of a long, very committing trip, a normal state of affairs for many who have also been in her position, but Mel was also clearly not connected to where she was at that moment.

At the end of one day early in the trip, Mary broke down and could not continue for the last few hundred metres to camp. She was distraught and overcome with grief about Kathlene's recent death. Nothing could be done in this situation except to offer some comforting words (which each person did in turn when she skied into camp). But by this time, it was already dark and quite cold. The rest of the group were busy with setting camp, changing clothes and making dinner, all necessary tasks considering the conditions. In her grief, Mary was temporarily unable to contribute to the group's welfare - or even her own for that matter. It is perhaps an unfair example of her disconnection with the immediacy of place and conditions, but it nonetheless speaks to the power of affective discomfort. There were others who found Kathlene's death difficult, and I recall reflecting on life and death at times I would rather have been thinking about only life.

However, Paula managed to write about how she came to bridge the sense of loss with a growth in personal outlook:

> I miss Kathlene quite a bit. She has felt so much a part of me for some time now, and she still feels here. I almost hear her every now and then, in dreams, or in the halfway place between sleep and consciousness. I had a dream while I was home that my pack was very heavy and I was hurting from it, when she came along and lifted its weight from me until I could hold it again. Everyone has fears of some things, and my fear is being avalanched upon. I think it deals more with my thoughts on life and death than anything. It is good to be here, in these situations, it helps me to face these fears and think things through (journal entry, Day 7).

Elements of fear played an important role in members' level of comfort in various places, but fear was felt and expressed differently by various people. Generally speaking, the men seemed more comfortable leading the group in the challenging sections of the trip while the women were quite obviously less comfortable. This was consistent during both the ski trip and the sea kayaking trip. For example, Mary was hesitant to lead on any leg of the ski trip that involved some type of descent. Most of the terrain we negotiated on the ski trip was at least undulating and, although she was offered the lead many times by both men and women, most often Mary declined. The other women led regularly, but usually when the question "Who would like to take the lead?" was asked, the women were, for the most part, silent. This was especially true for the difficult stretches and the men would invariably take the lead during these times.

However, there are more forms of taking the lead than being physically out front. *All* situations (that were not initiated by me) in which we debriefed or talked about issues were initiated and led by at least one of the women. Moreover, the absence of intimidation in social situations was not limited to our own group. An excellent contrast can be drawn between the experiences of Mel and Bailey during the Urban Solo in October, 1995. In Bailey's words: "I was with Mel and Kathlene and it was a little intimidating at times, being with those two" (post-interview). When I asked him why he felt that way, our conversation began to reveal the difference between his own experience and that of his partners:

> Bailey: Because they would - like, I was a little cautious about where I'd go and who I'd - and they were just carefree. They'd walk into any old place with anybody and it's just like, "You know, there *are* dangers around here." And I was just - yeah, not knowing what to expect. Yeah, so they were more or less dragging me to all sorts of places doing all sorts of silly things.
>
> Brent: Begging for money outside?
>
> Bailey: That, and peeing in the alleys (laughs). I didn't but they did. Oh, they walked into an X-rated video store. And (laughs) I got some good looks on that one. I walk in there with these two girls dragging me in (laughs). When we left

the mission, we left with that guy Casey.[6] But he took us on the grand tour; he was sort of walking in and out of all these bars. But it was going at a pretty breakneck speed. We were sort of walking when all of a sudden he stops and says, "Oh, we don't want to go in there." And he sort of turns around and comes back and I'm like, "Geez, why are we following this guy anyway?" And Mel and Kathlene were like, "Oh, this is great! Isn't this wonderful?" And I'm just like, "There's some potential for trouble here. I know he's being real nice to you and all, but I'm getting nervous."

For a while I was just following them, figuring that "OK, we're all sort of old enough and responsible. And I'll look out for them, but I'm also looking out for myself. And I'll sort of push my limit here a bit." But I was sort of watching how they'd react with this guy and the stuff he'd do and just to sort of see some of the reactions and what actually happens when you'd meet some of these people. And we ended up meeting a few odd characters. But when they just went up and started talking blah, blah, blah. And they would be friendly and they would talk back, blah, blah, blah, blah. And it was interesting that it wasn't someone that I would have even dreamt of approaching if I was by myself. Eventually - at one point they wanted to go up and talk to one of the prostitutes and I said, "No, I can't, I just *can't* (laughs)."

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[6] Casey was a man we met at the mission house where we helped serve dinner that evening. He accompanied our group on the tour of the facility. Casey developed an interest in us and asked us questions throughout the tour regarding outdoor education and the purpose of the visit. He took it upon himself to introduce some of the Explorations members to his world, an opportunity upon which Kathlene and Mel obviously capitalized.

> Brent: And why couldn't you?
>
> Bailey: *I don't know either*!! it was just - by that time my nerves were just...(post-interview).

Bailey could not quite articulate his thoughts on his last sentence and trailed off into a description of the bars they visited. What is perhaps most interesting in this exchange is that despite his fear, he was probably not in much danger. As he, himself, describes the people that he, Kathlene and Mel met that evening were pleasant and friendly. There was not one incident that would indicate overt danger, but Bailey was clearly uncomfortable in this situation. He recognized this when I encouraged him to expand on his near-encounter with the prostitute:

> Brent: When I asked you about the prostitute and you said, "I don't know" it sounded like you put some thought into that.
>
> Bailey: Well, I was trying to convince myself to [talk with her] because I really had nothing to fear. Because objectively I had - she wasn't going to do anything. She might curse and swear at me, might be the worst thing she would do. Because I wasn't worried about any pimp or anything because it doesn't happen that much in Edmonton. And they wouldn't harass me for just talking to somebody anyway. Like, it's nothing I had to fear about. And that was just a social thing. I don't know - I just - I couldn't explain it at the time; I still can't explain it now (post-interview).

Bailey's level of comfort on the urban solo was assuredly low, at times perhaps non-existent, but he was indeed a different person on trail during the trips with

Explorations. When I asked him to contrast his level of distress on the urban solo with his comfort on skis or in a sea kayak, and contrast all of that with his perception of others' experiences, his comments were insightful:

> Yeah, I noticed that quite a lot, even specifically with Mel. And we even had this conversation while we were on the urban solo. We were wandering around and she says, "Are you out of your comfort zone?" I go, "Yeah, I'm getting there - real fast." But I'd been skiing downhill before with Mel, but she wasn't comfortable going downhill with the pack on and stuff like that. And even with the kayaking, when the waves started to pick up, there was one point there - it was just after we left Goatz' place, we tried to go around [a point of land] we got caught in those standing waves in that current. And I could see it in people's faces - I was sweep boat at the time - there were some worried folks right there. And I was going, "Oh, man, I could surf one of these, I could surf one of these." But that would put people over the edge. Because there are people here who just they don't want to be here right now. There were other times when the wind picked up - like, even when we were together and we were catching a surf on some of those waves and other people were - they were like on the verge and they were like, "Don't you guys have any respect for anybody else?" And we weren't endangering anybody else and we were just goofing around because the opportunity was there and why not? But other people weren't as comfortable, but there wasn't much we could do for them - just stay within - and keep the mood light. So, that's another comfort thing altogether.

4.2(a) gender conflict

The contrasts between Bailey and Mel or Kathlene on the urban solo would not be the only situation in which the differences between the men and the women in Explorations would become apparent. As I reflect on the Explorations group and their experiences with the piles of field notes, journal entries and interview transcripts on the floor at my feet, I have become more convinced that gender relationships was the one unqualified failure in this research project. There were perhaps some minor saving graces, but by and large, this issue caused the most painful conflict while moving the least toward resolution. Even Kathlene's death saw a degree of healing by the end of the program.

Issues of gender, however, did not become resolved, partly because the main players were not all on the sea kayak trip. I believe my own role in the group also did not contribute much to a positive resolution for two reasons. First, I am male. It was much more difficult for me to be seen as mediating issues that centre around gender when my own gender creates a real or perceived bias. Second, for a variety of reasons that now seem counter-productive, I resisted intervening on most of these issues and I could rightly be perceived as supporting an unequal status quo during the ski trip because of this. And, as we have seen, there were external influences and pressures on our group that indirectly contributed to internal dissent, including issues of gender. In some cases, these could not be openly approached without risking the sensitivity of some very personal, and very delicate emotions and relationships. With Kathlene's death, for example, some people could not easily express that their emotion did not run as deeply as it might for others. Although Kathlene was known by all of us, there were some who were significantly closer to her. On the other hand, some might not have been able to feel such a strength of sorrow. At the end of Explorations, Paula mentioned that, at the time of Kathlene's death, it never quite occurred to her that others might not have known Kathlene as well as she.

Not in my own mind nor field notes, nor in the comments nor journals of any participants did there seem to be any conflicts or significant issues that could be attributed to gender or gender differences until Kathlene's death. And, I must admit, gender relationships was not a topic that was dealt with during the fall of 1995 in the sessions that came to be known as "Brent's World". I did have a session prepared in which I planned to address some of the issues identified by writers and practitioners in the field. However, due to the time constraints resulting from the dominance of logistical concerns during group meetings discussed earlier, and given the mistaken notion that gender did not somehow seem to be a problem for this group, it was never delivered. Nonetheless, despite my poor prediction capabilities, the group did indeed function in the preparation stages without significant gender-oriented internal issues. Conflict and disagreement were handled supportively by virtually everyone during group meetings and these disagreements did not divide the group along lines of gender. Without exception, internal conflict in the early stages of planning and preparation were seen by members on the basis of individual-group interaction. A fairly clear example of how this was in evidence was the reaction by several members following a meeting just before the Christmas break in 1995.

> I was impressed by the depth of the group's concern for each other during our last meeting. Will tried to convince the group to combine a few objectives for the next meeting after the [Christmas] break, but his view was overshadowed by everyone else - they all wanted to have two separate meetings. Ultimately, after some intense debate, Earl agreed. But he didn't look too happy about the decision and became rather quiet for the rest of the meeting. Both yesterday and today, someone came to see me about my thoughts on that event. Both asked how I thought Will was after the decision went a different way than he had hoped and Anne, in particular, seemed worried that she had done something wrong. If we can keep this level of empathy, we will have no problems on trail (field notes, December 13).

The reaction to the news of Kathlene's death provided the first outwardly expressed division between men and women. For whatever reason, the task of informing most of the group about the tragedy fell to me. We met in a small concrete floored and walled classroom (called the "outdoor classroom") adjacent to the Campus Outdoor Centre. Chairs were arranged in a circle by the staff at the centre in anticipation of the group's return from a three-hour telemarking session at a local ski hill. During that session, I had driven out to Camp Warwa to pick up Mary, Anne and Will who were supposed to be picked up by Kathlene a few hours before. All of us were to have attended the telemarking session, but instead we waited for the rest of the class to return to school.

Upon their return, I managed to tell the group of Kathlene's death in a few short sentences and the reactions to the news was varied, but very marked. One or two cried out loud, a few lowered their heads and sobbed quietly, some looked shocked, and a few merely fell silent. The women cried and comforted each other, except one who was seated between two men. The men, every one of us, were silent, some with heads bowed, but on that day and in that room, not one of us cried. Some time later, as people began to drift away from that room to the parts of their lives that still needed them, one of the women noted that none of the men cried nor showed much emotion. Another member expressed concern that the female member sitting between the men did not get the physical show of support from those beside her.

This was the first time that any action within the group was so totally divided along lines of gender and for some of the women, it appears to have been the beginning of a process of reflection on the difference between men and women in the group. Kathlene died on February 7, 1996. Shortly after her death, an entry from a personal journal illustrates both the frustration and desire to understand men in difficult times such as this: "Men! I don't get them. ...What great injustice did society do to boys that has made them afraid to cry? " (participant journal entry, Feb. 11, 1996). A few lines later, the same member wrote:

> I'm going to talk to Brent before Wednesday to make sure that how the women in Explorations appear to deal (what a horrible word) and that if the gathering is going to be facilitated by a man he had better figure out how to accommodate.

> His response to Mary made me angry.[7] I know that he is full of his own emotions and probably overwhelmed with how to be the grad assistant through this. Not that I really know, though. He hasn't really said (participant journal, Feb. 11, 1996).

In reading these journal entries at the end of Explorations, I was amazed to find that there was anger associated with my involvement, demonstrating some of my lack of understanding - at least for this participant. But there is a deeper issue here. My role for the author of the journal, and perhaps for others, was established firmly as male. Clearly, the issue of gender extended to include me and I was made male in all that I would come to do and say. If this view was also accepted by other group members, it becomes obvious that my own assumption that I was acting in the larger interests of the group was - at least insofar as perception is concerned - a wrong one. At this point I was, for some, no longer just the graduate assistant, but the *male* graduate assistant.

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[7] Anne is referring here to an incident in which I responded to a comment from Mary. Mary indicated that, as a group, we should engage in a public expression of grief for Kathlene. I remember the incident, but I did not record anything in my field journal. My response to Mary included the message that we all grieve in different ways and grieve differently at different times. I presented the idea that some people may feel somewhat uncomfortable with such a gesture. It was not my intent to anger anyone. Rather, I was seeking to protect people's individual expression of grief in what is often a very personal process. Clearly that strategy did not sit well with everyone. I maintain that I was protective of all the participants' desire to grieve in their own ways. Indeed, at one group gathering, I defended Mary's right to express her anger about the uselessness of Kathlene's death when those around her wanted her to focus on the goodness that Kathlene had brought into each of our lives. That evening, I spent hours with Mary and allowed her to vent some of her anger and frustration. I believe she attached herself to me on that occasion because I was willing to listen to her when she needed to give voice to the negative emotions that had welled up.

In reflection, I don't believe that we dealt well with Kathlene's death. I do think that we eventually came to respect each other's emotional space in trying to deal with the trauma it created for each of us, and that we each came to some stage of healing, that the deepest pains had begun to fade by the end of Explorations. But I also think that in the days just after her death, we established an implicit air of competitive grieving that served to split the group in ways that did not mend as we did on our own. I should make it clear that I am not attempting to burden the tragedy of Kathlene's death with our group's social problems, but there is little doubt in my mind that it provided a catalyst for some of the division in issues of gender.

The significance of this development for the project could only become fully realized once Explorations was over, once those who were kind enough to lend me their journals allowed me to witness some of their innermost thoughts. While my own remembrances of those days are quite different than the portrayal given in that participant's journal entry, what remains important is the degree to which lines of division were drawn and the impact this had on the individuals' experience of place on the trips. More specifically, if taken in the context that place is a very deeply social experience, this speaks to affective comfort in profound ways and its ability to either contribute to, or take away from, one's attachment to place on backcountry trips. The role of gender relations, both in polarizing the group, and, for some of the women, providing a measure of affective comfort, became more significant once Explorations had concluded and I was exposed to a greater range of thoughts from post-interviews and participants' journal entries.

4.2(a)(i) gender and the ski trip

On the ski trip, all of the women reported feeling discomfort on a few occasions regarding gender relationships.[8] Paula recalled a time atop one of the mountain passes:

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[8] There is an emerging literature about women's expeditions and gender relations on backcountry trips. For a more complete discussion of this literature see Bell (1997), Morse (1997), and Warren (1996). For specific issues related to the literature, also see Henderson (1992) and Bialeschki (1992). However, for the purposes of this dissertation, I have chosen to restrict the discussion largely to what happened directly in the experiences of our own group.

> It was when we'd just finished climbing to the top of a pass and some of the guys were there and they were asking each other - the three or four of us were standing in a group and saying, "So and so, should I take off my skins?"[9] And they were asking each other but totally ignoring me and I was like - I don't know if it was a me thing or if it was a woman thing. I guess I learned that they don't mean to be mean or anything - I don't know if it's a socially learned thing; it's just that they never considered whether I would have some input for that (post-interview).

Paula talked of this type of situation as a learning experience on how to deal with men who do not necessarily possess ill intent, but rather who are completely unaware of their impact on others in the group, specifically women. Since then, Paula's solution has been to speak up and educate the men who exhibit this behaviour about her very real ability to contribute in what she calls "technical" conversations. This was not an automatic response to a social dilemma for Paula, however. She needed a great deal of time to process and reflect. Her unspoken thoughts and feelings while on the trip are revealed by her answer to a different question:

> B: Is there anything about Explorations that you regret?
>
> P: Uhhh [long pause]. Yeah, on the ski trip, on the first two weeks, I can remember thinking of - it's terrible - I was thinking of all the mean things I

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[9] The term skins refers to a piece of equipment that attaches to the base of a ski and aids in the ascent of steeper sections on snow slopes. They may also be used on a descent to slow down a skier if the slope might have conditions that would create unwanted speed or if the skier would prefer a greater level of control while skiing.

> wanted to say after the [incident] passed. Not mean things, but stuff I shouldn't have kept and not said, just 'cause I'd get frustrated, you know? (post-interview).

A series of journal entries from Mel show how this type of discomfort affected the women on the ski trip. Although she does not discuss many of the details surrounding the specific situations generating her feelings, they are nonetheless consistent. The first entry on this subject begins very early: "Day 2. Cold, frustrating. I wanted to go home. I didn't feel like I could finish the trip. I remember why I don't like co-ed trips." Undoubtedly, there were more issues that Mel was attempting to deal with here (e.g., cold weather) than gender relations, but the consistency of entries over time is significant. "[Do] my negative experiences with male role models (i.e., my dad) have anything to do with why I don't like co-ed groups?" (Day 7). Mel's next entry goes to the heart of how both physical and affective discomfort work in combination. I have chosen to place the quotation here because it adds strength to the serial nature of the thoughts and feelings in the context of gender relations.

> Today was a kind of frustrating day. I cried a lot this morning. Just feeling really emotional mostly. Which I guess comes down to three things. My blisters are excruciatingly painful, when I fell coming down out of the pass, a section I was not comfortable leading to begin with. I'm frustrated that folks think that miles are more important than group dynamics or conversation. Three, I need more time to look at the mountains. And four, I guess again, is that I don't like co-ed trips (Day 9).

As did Paula, Mel found that success meant, in part, being able to contribute to the technical aspect of the trip.

> A couple of nice things happened today. Firstly, Bailey broke his binding. Well, not that that's good, but I had the repair kit - me, a girl - and I was the one that repaired his ski. Yippeee!! It felt great. I've never done anything like this before, but it seemed to work OK. I also led for quite a while this morning which felt really good, but then I stayed near the back later because my blisters really hurt. And also that way I could help Bailey if his binding blew again. Then we - Bailey and I - had a nice conversation at lunch (Day 10).

Clearly, the improved social connections Mel made that day through a display of technical competence contributed to her overall sense of well-being. In the final analysis, it was these social relationships that both sustained her and constrained her. In her post-interview and based on some previous informal conversations, I asked Mel if I was accurate in my assessment that she attempted to salvage a positive experience from the ski trip through focussing on her relationship with the women. She replied that in reflection she did view the trip on the whole as a positive experience, but also that "... I think I did, at the time, derive a lot of daily, day-to-day happiness and good feelings from the relationships from the other women on the trip. Yeah, so mostly that statement's accurate" (post-interview).

This connection among the women is borne out in Mel's personal journal and in the journals of other women. Mel shared her journal with me by way of a reading - she read selections she felt comfortable sharing and I taped her. I transcribed that reading and her explanations of some of the entries. One of her side-comments during the reading (in italics) is quite indicative of how her relationships with the other women provided the support she needed.

> I'm going to keep trying for conversation during meals. *I don't know if I say anything later about this, but Paula and I formed a pursuit of happiness club, and we decided that every day at meal time we'd try and throw out questions to try and get people to talk. And so we'd have this contest to see who could come up with the funniest dinner conversations and, like, throw a question out and see if people would talk about it. But then it would be really funny because she would say some weird thing and I'd just look at her and laugh because I'd know what she was trying to do* (Day 9).

Anne was also very attached to her relationships with the women in Explorations: "The women on this trip are so strong and supportive it is incredible" (Anne's journal, May 12). This does not mean that Anne did not see the men in a positive light, but that the women did have a special bond in some way. "Everyone is such a strong leader and great person in their own ways it makes us a special group. I hope I'll always be amazed by how much we care about each other - especially the women" (Anne's journal, March 25).

These types of alliances between individuals in the group existed largely among the women. Of course, some of the women were friends before Explorations began and it is prudent to recognize this fact in any analysis. But it would also be fair to say that day-to-day bonds between and among the women were stronger than either between and among men or in mixed situations. An analysis of my field notes from the ski trip began to reveal this when I focussed on patterns of association within the group. My early entries were fairly rudimentary, almost cast-off comments: "Very split today in terms of travel. The women were at the end of the line for most of the day" (field notes, March 6). But as this theme gathered strength in my journal, I began to pay attention to what had at first appeared to be some of the more mundane aspects of our relationships:

> I was sitting on my own during one of the times everyone had stopped, the men up front, the women behind. I was about 200 metres from either group. The reason for the break in travel up front appeared to be for route finding. It was an unsure process and there was a good deal of searching and calling among the men in their attempts to pick the best option for consistent travel. There were words of frustration up front that the group at the back were not joining them in the task at hand and one or two harsh calls were made to "encourage" the women to catch up. For their part, the women were sitting with packs off and I could hear talking and laughing. Whether the women could hear the men or not, I could not tell, but it seemed apparent that they were not moving until they had a sufficient break. They also did not ski up to my resting place (and to be honest, I was thankful for a few minutes of solitude). This is interesting considering our usual habit of taking a break all together (field notes, March 17).

Undoubtedly, it was these types of situations that led Mel, Mary and Paula to experience some very profound affective discomfort and made at least one express a desire in her journal to leave the trip at Two O'clock Creek (the half-way point). At the same time, though, these alliances among the women secured for them a level of affective comfort that kept them motivated to continue. Without the bond that the women experienced, it seems likely that one or more would have chosen to leave the trip.

There is little doubt that the women had fewer leadership opportunities on the ski trip; more often than not it was the men who led on the trails and who initiated decisions on route finding. At times, at least some of the men would exclude individual women in decision-making dialogue as was noted by Paula earlier. These missed opportunities resulted in conflict between individuals that were related to gender. However, these conflicts remained unresolved during the ski trip largely because they were not confronted directly. In a post-trip meeting, most of the men reported being unaware of the women's frustrations and affective discomfort during that time and I was also somewhat surprised to see the extent to which that frustration existed because it was never expressed on the trip.

4.2(a)(ii) gender and the sea kayaking trip

Neither on the ski trip nor on the sea kayaking trip were there any indications of a conscious exclusivity, but the level of support received for ideas, thoughts and comments, for most of Explorations was political in that, with some exceptions, women's comments were supported by women and men's by other men. This gendered support was different for men and women, however. The women seemed very aware of the gender lines drawn on the ski trip, while the men, except for Bailey (self-reported) were largely unaware of how relationships had been divided between men and women. In contrast, on the sea kayaking trip, the women, for the most part, seemed unaware of any gender divisions, while the men remained consistent in their level of awareness, that is, they were still unaware.

On the surface much of the conflict subsided during the sea kayaking trip, perhaps due in part to an increase in the number of women from the ski trip and the group's decision to impose a more rigid leadership structure that ensured access to leadership roles. The leadership schedule also ensured a more evenly divided responsibility for assuming those roles. The overt result of this action taken by the group was a more evenly distributed power in decision-making; every group member took their respective turn in the high profile roles of leading and route-finding among other duties. In this sense, there was some progress in breaking down the barriers experienced by the women on the ski trip. However, gendered conflict was far from resolved as a result of these changes. As mentioned above, support for ideas and decisions that required total group input remained split between men and women. With some exceptions, an inordinate number of interactions followed the pattern I recorded about the group deciding on the appropriate distance between boats while travelling:

> Mary brought up a concern that we were too far apart during the last paddling stretch. Anne supported her immediately. Bailey, on the other hand, thought otherwise and Damian brought up the idea that distance may depend on whether or not we were doing a crossing. Paula stated that it isn't a bad idea to be close anyway, because it means that a boat can be there that much quicker if someone went over (field notes, May 23).

The persistence of this theme is emphasised in another entry regarding a decision to build a fire on the beach or in the woods: "Once again, however, the women were either silent or supported Paula while the opposition to her ideas came from the men, including me" (June 5). This code of silence was a significant feature of the interaction among the women. I am quite confident that individual women did not always agree with each other in group discussions, but open disagreement among women was not commonly expressed with the larger group. Yet while I had documented a host of situations that demonstrated a tacit collaboration among the women, there was an explicit rejection of this happening during one of the group meetings. In an earlier group discussion, I had brought up a perception I held about the women spending time together and planning activities that did not consciously exclude the men, but did not include us either. When the issue was raised at a later meeting, one of the women challenged its validity. I began to second-guess myself and my observations until one of the women confided in me:

> [Name omitted] decided to say something to me regarding the issue of women hanging out together. She introduced the idea as something she "wanted to tell me" and let me know that she also noticed a difference. It has an interesting meaning attachment. Either she felt that she couldn't go against the women in an open forum, but in still wishing to tell me her thoughts needed to do so privately, or she felt that my ego was bruised and had a desire to support me (field notes, June 7).

On reflection, and given her commitment to honest communication, I don't believe this member merely wished to boost my ego. It is interesting to note, though, that she did not say anything on the issue in front of the other women. I was left to conclude in my field notes that inclusivity is not solely the domain of women and that perhaps "members of a gender majority are not as perceptive as they might be regarding their own flaws in interaction because they tend to create the structure" (field notes, June 7). The main point here is that the women on the trip may have been caught up in creating an idealized image of femininity to which all other women on the trip were uncritically assigned. Such a creation can also be limiting in the relationships between women and men, and between women and other women.

In answering what this might have to do with the relation to place, I am confronted by the degree to which place is constructed as a result of the social interaction happening within it. It was clear that the feeling of place as a peaceful and connective experience was compromised for the women on the ski trip. If some of the women on the trip were moved to write in their journals that they wanted to go home (i.e., back to the city), at least partially as a result of the gender based conflicts, it follows that their experience of place was not developing as positively as it might *if the social interaction among trip members was also more positive.* As well, despite the rejection of my observations on the sea kayaking trip by some of the women, a more inclusive social experience involving communication that would allow honest discussion and disagreement that transcends collaborative ties and gender lines would, in my opinion, facilitate a more compassionate construction of the places we travelled through.

4.3 place and temporality

I'm not sure that the implicit recognition that our outdoor living situations were, in fact, temporary, and in the context of our larger outdoor education culture, are always temporary, can be stressed too greatly. No matter how far we buried the thought in our minds, these backcountry trips would indeed come to an end. Mel, Bailey, and others noted that all their "stuff" is back in the city, the home to which each of us would return once the trips were over. Evidence that we treated our experiences in free nature as temporary were all around on both the ski trip and the sea kayaking trip, although this was much more prevalent on the ski trip. Comments one day after the half way point in the ski trip from participant that the trip "seems almost over" or the following conversation at lunch kept the very temporary-ness of these experiences, if not at the fore, at least just below the surface of our daily lives on trail.

> W: I have to deal with the trip one day at a time because 30 days sounds like too much to deal with.
>
> P: Yeah, it is a lot of days to think about, even the next food drop seems like a long time in days (fieldnotes, March 10)

At face value, this exchange might indicate that time begins to blur on trail and that we, as travellers, are more in tune with the here and now. After all, in the preceding conversation between Will and Paula, the end of the trip appears to become incomprehensible and this time stretching should make us lose sight of a fuzzily defined ending. I would like to offer a rather different interpretation. It is the very act of discussing the trip's end that raises its profile in our consciousness. Whether we embrace it as we do when we talk about hot baths and favourite meals that we look forward to at trip's end or whether we deny the clarity of finality as in the example above, we only serve to legitimize it and secure its place at the centre of our experiences. I also recorded some reflections that day:

> Generally, when we come to the backcountry (out on trail) we have an end goal in mind. That is, we "finish" the experience or trip when we reach a physical destination or the allotted time for the trip is up/over. Thus there always seems to be a foreseeable end of some description in sight all the while we are "on" the trip. Both time and space are "packaged" on a trip experience. This may have something to do with the idea that we cannot feel truly at home. Home is a place which has no destination (at least in time - and it cannot really be said to have a physical destination as such - we are not travelling anywhere). Death is the only boundary we place on the "home experience" (fieldnotes, March 10).

The last comment remains unsubstantiated and I was no doubt heavily affected by Kathlene's recent death. Nonetheless, the rest proved to be recurrent throughout Explorations '96. We were not the only ones to remind ourselves of the defined limits of being on trail. Other people we ran into along the way served as well in this capacity and local residents were especially adept. A brief story from my field notes about our arrival at Hotsprings Island while sea kayaking illustrates this point quite well.

> As we paddled across the water (to Hot Springs Island), we joked about kicking off the people in the motor boats who had been there for hours. In my mind at least, they were travellers like us and there was a feeling amongst our group that

they had had their fair share of time in the hot springs.[10] When we arrived, though, we all hesitated off shore, assessing the physical scene in front of us and deciding where on the beach to land. We chose to land off to the right, away from a small group of people occupying a spot on the beach by a log. One of the men from the group walked toward our projected landing site and helped stabilize boats, pull them ashore, and he even helped carry one up past the high tide mark. We exchanged pleasantries during this time and then he went back to his group. It was during this brief conversation we learned that Roy (our new acquaintance) was an indigenous local and was here with family and friends. Mel was the first one after we got our gear together who approached the group Roy was with. Paula and I followed and soon our whole group was standing talking to Roy. He was extremely friendly and his demeanor was one of a gracious host. It soon became evident that this place was well known to these people. Roy cracked open sea urchins, ate some and then encouraged us to try it. He spoke of ancestral heritage and the meaning of this island to his culture. Only Ingrid could take more than one portion and Mel and Anne later reported a gag reflex. I'm sure that it was fairly obvious to these folks that raw sea urchin was not an instant hit with most of us.

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[10] We had been told in our orientation by the Parks Canada Warden in Skidegate that only 12 people were allowed on the island at one time, and then only for a short time if others were waiting. This was perhaps reinforced by Al's story of being kicked off by one of the Watchmen himself. In wanting to keep within the rules, we accepted the authority of Parks Canada and applied them generically to all others who might also arrive at the island. In this particular instance, however, this excluded the understanding that some of the local Native people had about their own connection to that place.

> Passing the fire site on our way up from the beach to the springs, a little girl of about 4 said or did something I missed, but I caught the good-natured admonishment that followed. One of the men (her uncle we found out later) - cautioned her: "Oh, that's good behaviour to show the tourists." We were instantly and irrevocably established explicitly as people who were visiting, but who do not stay. In my assessment, it was a statement completely without malintent towards us. For him, it was merely a fact that we were indeed tourists (field notes, May 19).

Up to this point, we had not spoken directly to anyone outside our group since we set off from Moresby Camp. The closest we had come was having our pictures taken by another group of tourists on a sailboat as we paddled away from Skedans (May 12), an old village site. We had seen other sailboats in the distance, but it was early in the season for kayaks and we were, for all intents and purposes, out there alone. Two things struck me when I took the time to reflect on our encounter at Hot Springs Island. The first was the rather sudden change in our approach to the people on the island when it began to dawn on us that they were local, and more specifically, indigenous. We no longer allowed ourselves to consume the landscape, fitting it into our individual and collective identities. Instead, we began the process of weaving the meaning of places into a more expansive version of ourselves that included what we could grasp of the meaning of this place to these people we had just met, and for who we felt respect. The experiences and encounters on our travels from that point became less fodder for sustaining a self and more like subjects engaged in a dialectic with our place-making processes, subjects that were more likely to retain some of the meaning imparted by the others involved in those same experiences.

The second was the sheer generosity of spirit Roy and the others extended to us while we were on the island. This group of people was obviously at home in this place, but did not seem to feel that we infringed on their space. We were made welcome. It is not the place of this study to comment on the Haida culture, but this meeting had a profound impact on our travels. Instead of shying from social encounters, we became more open to their possibilities. After this we sought out contact with locals and did not shrink from meeting other travellers. Among other social acts, we purposefully crossed a strait to visit residents of Rose Harbour, we consciously invited another group of paddlers to join our fire over lunch at Newberry Cove, and we struck up a conversation with the residents of two sailboats anchored together. From all of these encounters, we came away enriched and with more knowledge of the area than if we had stayed strictly to ourselves. Of course, we attempted to remain mindful that not all might welcome our presence, but there was a distinctly conscious attitude of openness displayed by a number of members toward other humans in the natural places we occupied and moved through. In previous conversations within the group we had discussed this notion of approaching more people and being more approachable, but our meeting with the small group on Hot Springs Island gave us our first real chance to see how it might be applied in a very direct manner.

I cannot deny that travelling in remote and pristine natural areas often allows us to feel a more direct relationship with the land; I have felt those same epiphanies. But perhaps a lack of people in our nature travels also allows us to shed the reminder of being tourists. This, too, is not necessarily malevolent unless we attempt to subsume the landscape in a way that includes it in our s-self or if we try to convince ourselves that this construction of a relationship with nature is more real and therefore more deserving than our relationship with nature in our more urban homes. Such a construction can lead, and has led, to the maintenance of a separation between free nature and urban landscapes that seems not only to deny urban landscapes of their (potential) value, but also to release them of their responsibility to nature as a whole (see DeLay, 1996). In other words, and in this light, urban landscapes are seen to be that which we must escape from rather than something that is in need of re-connection. Neither of these relationships should be beyond reflection and critique, but creating and maintaining such a separation while - at another level of abstraction - recognizing the earth as an integral whole surely cannot be completely healthy.

4.4 nature and the city

Explorations '96 did not entirely escape this separation either. The treatment of city and nature was, for most of us, an incredibly inconsistent thing. Most people confirmed at one point or another what could be described as outdoor education's stereotype of city life. I recorded numerous occasions in which members, speaking from a values perspective, compared cities in an unfavourable light to "being" in nature. This ambivalence is perhaps highlighted better in no one else than Anne. In her pre-interview, she talked of camping with a group of people who were relatively inexperienced.

> There's a lot of questions, though, that kind of came in my head this weekend. You know people when - you'd go out camping once and they're all of a sudden - the urban scene becomes this bad, evil thing and being out in nature becomes the great harmony with the world. And, you know, it's not. Let's not be so romantic.

On the other hand, Anne made comments that contradicted this position throughout the rest of Explorations. On speaking of touring through the United States, she observed: "They have some great physical/geological features, but I wouldn't want to visit any of the cities" (field notes, March 21). This statement may have been more a criticism of American culture than of city life in general, but in speaking of where she skis in town, Anne made this comment: "Just the river valley. Yeah, it's great! You can go right from Groat Road Bridge all the way out to Whitemud. And you can feel like you've left the city; you can feel like you're completely gone" (pre-interview, October, 1995). In my field notes, Anne and Mel talked about how they had come to associate the city with stress (May 13) and in her own journal, Anne also places the value of nature above the city. However, Anne does spend some time reflecting on this city/nature relationship and she attempts to come to terms with it when she writes:

> The spiritual renewal of sitting alone in the rain and tree branches makes me not want to go back to the city. The city is not bad - it has been significant in making me. But I don't look forward to returning. To [friends and family] - sure, but not to the stresses of there (journal, June 5).

Her reflection demonstrates a tension between what she expresses emotionally in her connection to nature and what, intellectually, she thinks she should feel. Anne is an extremely insightful thinker, but this issue causes her - as it does others - some grief. In her attempt to integrate earth's wholism that includes a place for urban landscapes as well as natural ones, she is caught by the dilemma that landscapes in free nature reach to her in deeper, more significant ways. As I noted earlier in this chapter, our culture, especially our outdoor education culture, teaches us to separate the city from our connections to nature, to the extent that even significant nature within the city is not generally seen as part of the city. From this perspective, if we examine Anne's comment about being able to feel like she has left the city while skiing in the river valley, we can see that her conception of the city does not include the nature that the river valley embodies. The question we should ask is this: if the river valley park system is geographically located entirely within the bounds of Edmonton, what dislocation of thought is needed to reach the conclusion that by still being within the city, we can also escape the city? While it may be the stresses found in the city rather than the city itself that Anne wishes to escape, the language used about cities implicates the landscape it describes. The answer with which we are confronted, then, is that we mentally and culturally separate these two landscapes. It is my judgement that unless we make room for nature in our constructions of urban landscapes - on the level of abstraction as well as concretely - our connection to nature will never be quite complete. I do not deny that free nature is far from over-represented in most urban centres; this is precisely the point. Anne is not alone in her very real inability to adequately connect to nature in the urban centre that she knows. Our vision of what a city could look like is in need of re-thinking. But in order to make these needed changes in our urban lives, we will need to bridge this nature/humanity gap; we need to be able to say that the river valley is part of the city, not an escape from it. And equally important for this study is the need for us to inject an element of culture into the natural landscapes we visit.

Summary: the model's analytical fit

In their various ways, all of these themes and discussions of events in Explorations '96 relate to the model presented at the beginning of this chapter. As with all models, Figure 5.1 is an attempt to explain, in visual form, the phenomena encountered in the research and the analysis of the relationships between those phenomena. Utilizing my own deep ecological lens, the model represents the pathways and barriers that were experienced by the members of Explorations '96 in their attempts to connect to the wider world. The model's relevance can be traced when the events confronting the Explorations members and their behaviours are analyzed in the context of their own connectedness. The pathways illustrated in the model appeared to be well represented when the group seemed to be, in a deep ecological sense, most connected. A strong example of the deep ecological shift can be lifted from Anne's statement:

> It amazes me how the names of a place demonstrate its history. And reading of the Haida words, names, forts, villages, chiefs... [and] to much less of an interest the miners, loggers and pioneers, the Charlottes seem more tangible to me, a bit closer to my heart. It's the same with watching the tidepools, birds, seals and touching the bark of hemlocks, Sitka Spruce and Alder trees. I love to become

> familiar with places I travel to. To make some connection, something that will link my memory of it to me (Anne's journal, June 5).

It is evident that Anne was striving to make connections between her existence in Edmonton and her experiences in Haida Gwaii. In her words, Anne demonstrates a development of self. She glimpsed the larger connection between self, home and Haida Gwaii without subsuming or being subsumed.

The recognition of place as a social experience created liberating potential. Coming to terms with the fact that nature is shared by those on the trip as well as those who live and visit the same places allowed us to open up our ideas of the landscape to include the voices of others. In turn this broadened view of place encouraged a more understanding construction of the nature that we went to see. No doubt there is a tension between the power of being alone in nature and the potential of consciously sharing that nature. Stephen Trimble writes of just such a situation in his attempt to understand his partner's role in his relationship to wild places:

> My wife, Joanne, both enhances and distracts from what I see in nature alone. She asks questions and enthuses; we talk. In striving to articulate what we feel, how each of us reacts to the land, we use language earlier than I would alone to recreate the feel of light on sandstone or the smell of cliffrose (Nabhan and Trimble, 1994, p. 162).

There are differences, of course, in Trimble's more intimate relationship with his wife and those of friends and colleagues in Explorations, but perhaps the fact that educational experiences are by and large social ones, it becomes all the more important to recognize the existence of social and cultural contexts of landscape and to talk about them, to share them so that we might learn more from each other in the time we have. Explorations members learned this lesson, I think when we sought out the social connections during our travels on the sea kayaking trip, when we stopped at Skoki Lodge during the ski trip and when we sought to create more equity among individuals and between women and men in Haida Gwaii.

Conflict, whether it was generated internally by the desire to "see it all" and the frustration of not being able to reconcile physical or affective discomfort with developing a compassionate sense of place, or imposed externally, through Kathlene's death, Anne's stove accident or the letter from the outdoor professional, proved to be an effective barrier for the participants in gaining a greater sense of Self. While times of non-conflict or the resolution of conflict provided genuine feelings of connectivity, unresolved conflict tended to inhibit the participants' ability to witness anything approaching Self-realisation.

The first step in conscientizing ourselves and our connection to place was critiquing our own travel. The very clear example of the ski trip began a process which saw the participants attempting to consciously connect to place on a level that was more profound than merely existing in a travel corridor. In the consciously made decisions of how we would travel in the Queen Charlottes, we became exposed to more cultures that have some claim to the islands than we would otherwise. Museums, hitchhiking, discussions with Haida chiefs and even slowing the pace of travel tightened our connection to the land of Haida Gwaii.

Finally, there are connections in the model itself and the themes it represents. All three pathways are interconnected, for example. It would be difficult to say that conscientized travel could occur without recognizing the social and cultural aspects of our travel. Also, affective comfort has much to do with the group's social interaction and state of cohesion. As I stated at the beginning of this chapter, this model is not perfect. On the other hand, it does seem to explain some of the lessons learned by members of Explorations '96 as we strove to connect to nature and the rest of the world in as profound a way as we could negotiate for ourselves.

Chapter Six: Some Final Words

To venture causes anxiety
but not to venture is to lose one's self.
And to venture in the highest sense
is precisely to become conscious of one's self
Soren Kierkegaard

Introduction

In some ways I am the last remaining member of Explorations. All the others have moved on to other pursuits in life, but mentally at least, I have remained connected to this project in a way that has constantly occupied my thoughts. Every day since the official close of Explorations '96 I have felt the presence of this research. As the days accumulated, the connection became more painful than pleasant - not because of the memories of the experience, but because I increasingly agonized over my analysis and the overall success of the research. When I first put fingers to keyboard in my push to complete this project once the program had concluded, I had been hard at it for almost three years. At the beginning, I had grand hopes for my research. My main objective was to make a tangible difference, a contribution to the lives of others in a real sense. I was determined not to have my project become another leaf press, a testament to a modification of Newton's law of motion (i.e., theses at rest tend to stay at rest). Now, almost another three years further along, I am satisfied that the project has made a small difference. I am fairly certain of the potential contributions of this work to my field with regard to theoretical development, but in the final analysis I must answer to the people with whom I worked in Explorations '96. There must have been a difference in their own lives for me to consider the project worthy of being labelled critical social science.

What oppressive features of their existence did I play a part in alleviating? How do they experience the world of outdoor education differently and what improvements in their relationships with the earth have resulted - if only in part - from our interaction together? Perhaps the first step is to assess the validity of the study. In this way, we can at least know to what extent my analysis was an accurate reflection of the participants' experiences and to what degree I accomplished that which I set out in the first three chapters of this dissertation.

on validity

The overarching goal of the project was to explore the potential of developing a compassionate sense of Place in a group of outdoor education students in the Explorations Program at the University of Alberta. I sought to employ emancipatory research methodology in order to begin the process of conscientizing the students with regard to the outdoor culture and their own travel experiences. My hope was that exposure to a variety of paradigms would assist these students in constructing a more wholistic sense of Place based on the theoretical principles of Naessian deep ecology. In other words, how could we come to understand and move towards a sense of Place that attempts to value places as connected to a larger whole?

Validation for the project came in the usual ways. Informal member checks throughout the program were useful and post interviews proved to be both informative and supportive of the evolving analysis. I did not speak with everyone during the trip phase to explicitly seek confirmation of my analysis, but informal conversations and direct comments from participants allowed me to gauge our success relative to the stated goal above. Whether from talking about plans for future trips or merely from watching the evolution of their objectives for the sea kayaking trip, it became clear that this research was being validated by the participants themselves. Two members saw the final interview as a chance to reflect on the program and their experiences, a sign that I at least managed to address relevant issues for them. Mary stated in her interview that I helped her to debrief Explorations and Anne wrote this in her journal: "Chatting with Brent was a bit of a closure on Explorations - time to reflect on ups and downs" (July 18).

In the research design, the bulk of the critical questioning was to happen in the pre-trip period through meetings and sessions given over explicitly for that purpose. There may have been some mild success in these sessions. During the trips we utilized some of the concepts presented during that time. In fact, one member attributed our lack of overt social conflict to the discussions and group exercises we did prior to the trips. Damian was the only one to do so and it is interesting to note that his perception of the group dynamics on trail was also a benign one, somewhat in contrast to other participants and my own analysis. According to him, we didn't get into "a big huge family feud" (post-interview). In following up, I asked him why he thought that we didn't get to that point and he responded:

> Come on, you got an easier question in mind (laughs)? I don't know. I think it was definitely our preparation. All the "pre" stuff we did, all the in-house - your place, Jen's place, the communications things we did. All the sitting up in our planning room, getting all those things on the boards, setting out guidelines. The

> responsibility for each other's physical and emotional well-being, that was key; that was just sooo key (Damian, post-interview).

Damian provided some support for the pre-trip sessions in the excerpt above, and the fact that he remembered a few that were significant for him is evidence that he at least considered them to be useful. For my part, I would be less generous about the role of these sessions. My own contributions were minor, and, as discussed previously, the strength and number of the pre-trip sessions was curtailed by other seemingly pressing matters. Moreover, none of the other participants echoed Damian's sentiments. Undoubtedly, we would have benefitted from more preparation in this regard, but, my own impression is that most Explorations members would identify on-trip sessions and discussions as something that might have contributed more directly to emancipatory change. Unfortunately, I cannot speak to this aspect of the study as Damian was one of the last to be interviewed and I did not follow up on his thoughts with the other members.

By far the most significant agent for positive change in group members was the combination of actual experience and taking the opportunity to reflect on those experiences. A superb example of this is the complete re-thinking of the sea kayak trip - especially in the style and pace of travel - as a direct result of the difficulties encountered on the ski trip. Considered as part of the dynamic, dialectic process of conscientizing ourselves in our travels in, and our relationships to, nature and culture, this last recognition is an example of what Lather (1991) would describe as catalytic validity. Change in the participants' relation to the land and its inhabitants between the ski trip and the sea kayak trip can be discerned in phenomena like Mel's mountaintop revelation and in the group's obvious and conscious attempt to alter the travel on the sea kayaking trip. Moreover, these changes were a direct result of the shared experiences and recognitions during the program. My own role in this particular process was limited to asking some pointed questions at one or two of the group meetings. Perhaps this is appropriate, however, in that critical researchers and activists prefer that the bulk of emancipatory change within a group come from the larger group membership and not from the researcher or activist.

Although research validity was demonstrated for the most part in the standard manner, the most unexpected validation came by way of the slide show held on November 14, 1996. Explorations had been officially over for months, but a tradition exists that the members of the past year put on a public presentation. The centre piece of the evening is almost always a visual representation of the experience - usually a slide show set to music and narrative. However, other activities, including readings, words of thanks, dedications and the like are common. For my contribution to the evening, I was asked to do a reading in order to give the audience a feel for what it might be like to be a member of Explorations '96. I included a few significant events and some insights gleaned from the experiences of the group in the prose of poetic narrative (see Appendix A).

When the evening program had concluded and the slow retreat to the doors was underway, interrupted here and there by incidental and planned conversations scattered throughout the room, I received a validation that I had not anticipated. People from Explorations past and present commented that they could feel their own experiences in the words I had read. Lather (1991) refers to this kind of "'click of recognition' and a 'yes, of course'" experience as face validity (p.67). According to Lather, "Face validity is operationalized by recycling description, emerging analysis, and conclusions back to at least a subsample of respondents..." (p.67). The oral presentation I gave fits with some of the criteria for face validity. Although it was unintended, the words from Appendix A gave some insight for the members in Explorations regarding their connections to places they had visited and travelled through. It was undoubtedly an epiphany for me. In attempting to capture some of the meaning for the students in the most recent Explorations program, others from previous years also found themselves being spoken to. I had reached the widest possible "subsample" of Explorations participants and, in some ways, managed to receive support for the experiences of the '96 Explorations participants as representative of those who had come before us. Perhaps the power of poetic prose was influential in this regard because each listening subject is free to interpret meaning as they choose and relate words intended to invoke general feeling to concrete personal memories, but there is little doubt that the reading struck a chord with some aspects of the experiences of Explorations members in general. Two members of Explorations '96 later asked for a copy of the reading.

The study is also supported by construct validity, a reflexive approach to information gathering and analysis that places the analysis in relationship to the theory that informs it.

> Our empirical work must operate within a conscious context of theory-building. Where are the weak points of the theoretical tradition we are operating from

> within? Are we extending theory? Revising it? Testing it? Corroborating it? Determining that constructs are actually occurring rather than mere inventions of the researcher's perspective requires a self-critical attitude toward how one's own preconceptions affect the research. Building emancipatory social theory requires a ceaseless confrontation with and respect for the experiences of people in their daily lives to guard against theoretical imposition (Lather, 1991, p.67).

A reading of the analysis reveals that the main theoretical framework from which I build (i.e., deep ecology) is indeed extended by adding meaning to constructs such as Self-realisation and 'nature as home' from the empirical evidence supplied by the participants themselves. As Rothenberg predicted in the first chapter, I doubt that any of us would comfortably say we "reached" a state of Self-realisation, but there were moments and stretches of time that seemed to point out a directionality for us to follow in connecting with places. It is clear that several members of Explorations '96 spent a good deal of time and effort trying to reflectively "place" themselves in the nature and culture of the landscapes we visited. There were significant passages in some of the journal entries, for example, that showed the author's desire to situate the meaning that certain places had for them among their larger understanding of the world.

As well, I have woven deep ecology together with Schutz' theory of social interaction and in doing so I have provided at least one important point of departure from Naess' position that nature does not lend itself to social interaction. This is one theoretical element that was undeniably clear in the lived experiences of the Explorations '96 members. The social component of experiences in free nature is not only inescapable (especially in educational settings), but can be incorporated into a very positive attachment to place. And as I have implied here, in the educational context of introducing people to the natural world, outdoor educators would be remiss if this aspect was undervalued.

on building theory

The structure of the preceding analysis was the result of an inductive process. While I had some ideas on what to say and do prior to the trip, the precise "how" of facilitating the enhancement of the participants' articulated sense of place was by no means clear to me. What came about and culminated in this research is based in hazy beginnings. The theory that is presented here creates a tension for me between two distinct feelings. I am happy with what I have been able to generate through my work with this group of people. There are elements in the analysis that cry for attention in my field and I feel validated in my initial concern for the state of outdoor education. There seems to be a need to continue to make explicit, and thereby more available for conscious examination, the messages given to the students of outdoor education.

At the same time, the study feels incomplete. In my efforts to avoid parcelling knowledge into manageable, but isolated chunks, I am also forced to recognize that whatever has begun here is a work in progress. I have become interested in the integration of theories that cut across lines of traditional disciplines, and while my theoretical orientation remains guided by deep ecology and critical social science, I have not limited myself solely to these lenses. In this regard, the theory can appear to be frayed. I prefer to think of this situation as the inclusion of more fibres in an attempt to create stronger ties, not only between theory and practice, but between and among various theories. Like life, the theory presented here is messy - and not finished.

In chapter two, I identified problems with outdoor education in Alberta's universities and how its structure encourages the valuing of certain skills and experiences. I believe that I have made some progress in moving toward resolving those issues. My ultimate goal for outdoor education in post-secondary education is nothing short of a total reformulation of its position in the larger social fabric. I wish for outdoor education to regain its status as a radical social and educational force, to push outward the fringes of thought in the dialogue on human-nature relationships and to nudge the margins of social awareness and acceptability of how we might connect to the rest of life. Clearly, this project did not - and could not - meet that lofty goal, but some small steps were taken to begin a very long process.

There were perhaps some missed opportunities that would have aided the project's emancipatory goals. A somewhat greater emphasis on exploring the issues of gender would have been appropriate in this study. At one level, this might have meant a more explicit attempt to create dialogue between the men and the women on the trips, while at a more theoretical level, we might have devoted more attention to the relationship between our experiences and feminist literature. Together, this would have created stronger links to the issues of critical pedagogy and methodology framed in chapter three. Similarly, providing more opportunities for the participants to come into contact with Native issues in Haida Gwaii would have furthered the goal of encouraging compassion as a touchstone for their development of place (or Place) in the area.

However, on other levels, we were more successful. By the sea kayaking trip, our group was certainly more concerned about experiencing deeply than gaining the physical and technical skills necessary to become sea kayak guides. Once Al had imparted the basic skills needed to paddle safely on open water, there was virtually no mention of skills acquisition. In spite of the fact that there was still a great deal more to learn in technical aspects of sea kayaking, time was spent in reading cultural histories, exploring tidal zones and forests, bird-watching, or one of the other interests that seemed to rise in importance during that trip. Gaining technical skills on the sea kayaking trip became a means to more important ends than an end in itself. In this way, we managed to challenge the cultural norm of privileging technical expertise during our travels. However, the members of Explorations '96 may not fit the norm in this regard; technical expertise did not seem to be overly stressed on the ski trip either. Perhaps this is because basic skills needed to travel and cover distance did not take long to learn and there was very little time available for much else.

The participants consciously and effectively dealt with other issues as well. In changing the focus of their travel from the ski trip to the sea kayak trip (i.e., destination travel), individuals within the group began to shed the burden of a utilitarian approach to the land and its other occupants. In identifying and realizing their goal of including the "urbanized" part of Haida Gwaii as important to the overall experience, the participants were able to gain a better feel for the islands. Their understanding of the relationship between humans and nature grew more than if they had not bothered with trying to get a sense of Skidegate, Queen Charlotte City and Masset. In a sense, urban landscape and natural landscape became much more tethered to the larger concept of the place called Haida Gwaii.

recommendations

In stating that this project was partially successful, two questions should be raised to complete this stage of the praxis spiral. First, what could have been done in the context of this dissertation to make for a better study? What did I miss as a researcher or what, in hindsight, would have added to the project and its findings? Second, in which direction does the analysis point? Being so closely connected to the research for so long, the first question is undoubtedly the easier of the two to answer. There are perhaps scores of suggestions I would have for my six-year-younger self, but I shall attempt to limit this part of the discussion to what I see as the most significant areas of neglect or limitation.

rethinking the method

Overall, I am still excited by the potential - and happy with the results - of the methodology I chose. However, I am struck by the number of small holes in the original plan outlined in chapter three that were designed to implement the theoretical position, that is, the method. For example, I chose to concentrate the critical component of the study during the pre-trip phase of Explorations and to rely heavily on participant observation during the time spent in the backcountry. The rationale for this was that I needed to keep in mind that the participants' program experience should not be overshadowed by my study. I now believe this to be an error in judgement insofar as the research is concerned. Given that the program's objectives were quite compatible with my own, I would probably not have been overly intrusive if I was more involved, from a research perspective, during the tripping phase. In one sense, I might have undervalued my own potential contribution as a member of Explorations. More often than not, I was extremely conscious of creating a power gradient if I offered my advice or opinion and this mindset prevented me on occasion from acting as a plain member of the Explorations community.

The tension between attempting to become a member who contributes, but who does not co-opt other members' opportunities for growth and dealing with a growing sense over the tripping phase that the critical development within the program might have been so much better, was consistent in my own reflections about the project as a whole. I struggled with knowing where the balance might lie between these two, conscious of the fact that an action in one direction might be antagonistic to the other. The very grey area of my own role in the context of the Explorations experience was captured by Anne in two different journal entries. The first validates my concern about unwanted influence:

> I wonder about this "Brent" influence sometimes. I was quite looking forward to the Yatza hike with just us. Although he's not overbearing at all, his presence and

> opinion influences the group. I would like to see how we interact as a group without him (June 3).

In a final, evaluative entry, Anne provided the following thought:

> Brent's style/approach is what we wanted. Although at times I think we could have benefitted from direct leadership, that's not what Explorations is about. If we wanted to learn from a teacher/instructor then Yam[nuska] is the place. Explorations is self-directed and we did a damn good job at that (no date).

Anne's second comment seemed to speak for a balance of my role within the program, but I remain unconvinced that I was able to walk that fine line on most occasions. I believe that the students in Explorations would have had enough respect, both for me and for themselves, such that the integrity of the program would have remained largely undamaged if I had initiated more group discussions or attempted to deal more directly with issues confronting the group. At the very least, this would be a subject to have taken up with the participants in their post-interviews upon the completion of Explorations '96. On the other hand, as Anne observed, whatever they accomplished, the accomplishment was their own and a fundamental tenet of critical pedagogy holds that participants should feel this way.

Another substantial consideration connected to the issue above is the incomplete success of the critical component in the pre-trip phase. Due to the combination of events described in chapter three, we collapsed two meeting times into one longer session, effectively eliminating time that was to be dedicated to issues that were germane to the research and that the members had asked me to facilitate. In reflection, either during or after the trips, most participants described a greater need for this type of preparation. Once again, I was afraid of interfering with the decisions made by the group and as I was the only person this seemed to affect, I did not object to the change. This certainly diminished the effectiveness of this portion of the planned research and given the opportunity again, I would not repeat my acquiescence. In the long run, any resistance on my part to change the original structure of our meeting times would probably have been forgotten while the benefits for the members might have increased considerably.

Being more open with my own theoretical base or orientation might also have been helpful. In my attempts to maintain a rigorous academic attitude, I refrained from presenting too much of my thought development presented in chapters two and three. I did give the participants a brief outline of my proposed research, but because I did not wish to unduly influence the participants and the outcome of the project, kept my theoretical orientation somewhat vague. A typical brief response to those who would ask what I was studying went something like: "I'm interested in looking at how outdoor educators gain a sense of place." From that point, I could easily deflect questions away from the critical aspect of the research and focus on general information concerning sense of place and how people in outdoor education training programs might develop connections to the places in which they travel.

Arne Naess was scheduled to speak at the University of Alberta shortly after the completion of the ski trip and I had been heavily involved in the organization of the visit. Recall the discussion from the previous chapter regarding the conversation on the cut-line. As it happened, several of the students became interested in finding out information on deep ecology and Arne Naess, and I answered questions and spoke with them for a few kilometres along the trail. Over the next two days, these students became excited about his visit and began to read from Is it painful to think?, a biographical account of Naess' life to that point. Two days after the interest developed, Mel made her pivotal statement on the top of Pipestone Pass. No doubt there was some excitement as a result of the immanent visit from Naess, but that theoretical discussion on the cut-line proved to be a springboard for a questioning of how Mel and others had been relating to the land. I am left to wonder if a more frank and open treatment of my critique of outdoor culture in general might also have generated some productive reflection.

the life-research relationship

There were also events affecting the research but that were out of my control, some minor and some staggering in their impact. Of any single occurrence, Kathlene's death was far and away the most significant. Losing a member so tragically had implications for the other participants and the research in ways that I could not begin to articulate. Processing the psychological dimensions of such traumatic experiences was neither part of the research, nor was it an area of expertise for me and I must claim to have been woefully overwhelmed - as a researcher, as a graduate assistant attempting to facilitate a program and as a person. I recognize the inadequacy of my credentials to analyze the relationship between Kathlene's death and Explorations '96, but some comment from the researcher's perspective may be appropriate at this stage of the project.

On one level, her death galvanized the group in their resolve to complete Explorations. As Paula said, finishing that which Kathlene had once been a part took on new meaning and importance. At the very least, however, dealing with Kathlene's passing brought problems with group cohesion more sharply into focus. It is quite likely that gender conflicts would have arisen despite the observations I made in chapter five, but the apparent split between men's and women's grief could also have made it difficult to approach gender issues, especially during the first half of the tripping phase. As a group, we never did talk openly about this split and I know that I was unwilling to begin such a discussion. In looking back from the vantage point of three years' reflection since then, it might have been useful to at least raise some questions for consideration, but emotions were running high at the time and if gender issues were in any way embedded in individuals' feelings regarding Kathlene, there was potential for damage in an uncounselled discussion. As a source of conflict, there was undoubtedly potential for growth, but I am not sure that we were ready, as a group, to contextualize a discussion with such sensitivity merely in terms of conflict. Perhaps Explorations '96 just ran out of time; our group was not together long enough to accomplish such a lofty goal of group healing by the end of the program. Individual members came to terms with some of the distress on a personal level, but it might not be fair to expect a diverse group in the process of negotiating social norms and with varying degrees of intimacy with Kathlene to come to a full understanding of each other's healing process in a few short and hectic months.

In a more directly observable turn of events, there has been an imbalance of sorts in participant contribution to the development of the study. Recall Table 4.1 and the participation level of each Explorations member. Even though I sought to utilize whatever I could from all possible sources of data collection, a significant amount of information in the form of participant observation was lost for those members who did not participate either fully or at all during the trip phase of the research. The imbalance was exacerbated by the fact that not all participants chose to either write trip journals or share those journals with me. Those who participated fully and who gave me access to their journals are over-represented compared to others in the study. In attempting to increase the number of sources for analysis, I also managed to produce stronger participation from certain participants within the study. For this reason, I opted to exclude an "across" analysis of the participants' agreement with the thematic development. In my judgement, such a representation would have been both unfair and inaccurate.

recommendations for further study and application

Reflecting on the progress that was in fact made toward constructing a compassionate sense of Place by the participants in Explorations '96, there are several areas that could be considered for further development. First and foremost, I would suggest that a similar study to this one - cognizant of the methodological pitfalls described above - should be repeated. To a certain extent, the issues I wanted to pursue were changed by the unusually difficult circumstances faced by the group. As well, the change in scheduled time for sessions during the pre-trip phase served to co-opt some of my earlier efforts in following my intended method. Under less traumatic circumstances, and with more opportunities to examine issues before and during the trips, it would be interesting to see if this research would compare in any way to another group's experiences.

A critical investigation of established leaders in the profession of backcountry travel and outdoor education that seeks to create an open dialogue about the implicit and dominant norms within outdoor education could provide more feedback on the theoretical orientation expressed here. As well, such a study would have the benefit of moving from people who expect a substantial educational component to their programs (i.e., students) to those who are already caught up and established in the culture that is being critiqued.

Ever present is the relationship between nature and the city. Research that focussed specifically on this aspect of place development and how we might facilitate a blurring of the conceptual lines between the two would be enormously helpful. The emerging recognition of the link between the social, the cultural and the natural is an area of thought that is timely for outdoor education practitioners. Destabilizing the dualism that currently exists between these places might even prove to be key in treating the whole earth as Home.

Work should begin on developing programs and courses that are dedicated to the principles of connecting with Place rather than merely connecting with wilderness and wild nature. A specific curriculum designed, implemented and then studied will likely produce valuable experiences and information that might point out some direction for how we could encourage wholistic worldviews. What would become the focus of a trip that was without a physical destination?

There is, of course, a need to continue the research of gender issues on backcountry trips. The women of Explorations '96 encountered barriers during the ski trip, a situation that was improved during the sea kayaking trip. However, for a variety of reasons, most women also adopted an uncritical supportive stance for each other during the trips. The solution in mixed gender trips for enhancing affective comfort is far from clear and considerably more complicated than focussing on the oppression of women and providing more leadership opportunities.

Problems with adopting perspectives such as the one described above have been raised in the literature. For example, Schwartz-Shea and Burrington (1990) documented some oppressive features of a women's-only peace camp that appeared to block dissenting voices from within. According to the authors, the assumption that women were naturally caring and social contributors led to an atmosphere in which some women felt that they could not criticize the actions and behaviours of other women. Although the social context of the peace camp and our own situation were different, there are enough parallels to warrant research that specifically targets gendered relationships and sense of place. How can the interactions between men and women on backcountry trips be encouraged to be more androgynous, and what might success in such an endeavour mean for connection to place?

In terms of building onto the theoretical framework, how can we reconcile the concrete and the abstract as both worthy and functional in a sense of Place, especially given that the participants in this study needed to see, feel and experience directly? What aspects of the way we even look at landscapes (i.e., landscapes of the mind) would have to be addressed in order to sustain and nurture the integrity of our abstracts - others' concretes?

completing the circle

The acceptance of outdoor education as a worthy field of academic study and a generally respected profession is a relatively recent phenomenon. That the profession has traditionally spent its energies on acquiring social acceptance belies its youth. Until recently, a major task of outdoor education researchers has been to establish the field and provide a solid rationale for its existence. Aside from the question of whether this task has been accomplished to any significant degree, the fact that outdoor education has more recently come under critical analysis by other perspectives that examine human-human as well as human-nature relationships may indicate a potential maturing period for us. In a positive light, if post-secondary outdoor education programs can begin to provide rigorous critiques of their own content and process, the field stands an excellent chance of becoming a more positive force for eco-social change.

The men and women who participated in this study have demonstrated some questioning and challenging of their relationships with nature and each other, partly as a result of their participation in Explorations '96. My hope for them - and for myself - is that we become part of a new paradigm for outdoor education, that we continue to learn and teach others the shifts in focus that are necessary to develop a deep and compassionate sense of Place.

I am still struggling to find closure to my own Explorations experience. I'm sure that I will be digesting what I have learned here for years to come. This research project has taught me that there are fundamental problems with the way that outdoor experiences have come to be structured and with the expectations assigned to wild nature and the human place within it. However, I have also witnessed the potential for opening up to different, more inclusive mindscapes in our approach to landscape. There is still room to nurture our radical roots in this field, to develop and encourage curricula with critical pedagogy, to challenge the default ethics of society that have co-opted part of outdoor education. I have learned that indeed it is possible to connect to place in ways that seek to build a web between and among those places. A compassionate sense of Place does indeed provide directionality for a profound way of connecting to the world. Perhaps I can only reach a limited degree of closure with Explorations; appropriately it is only part of my own life's web, unfinished as it will always be, but building in a direction that I see as worthwhile.

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Appendix A

Imagine: Unexpected Validation

Imagine

It is the winter of 1994, more than two years before the first trip will actually depart for the mountains in a program that will come to take its place among the experiences and faces of Explorations history. The living and learning of what will become Explorations '96 is not yet, cannot yet, be known.

During the next 24 months we will work as we have never worked before. Merely raising the funds needed - $16,000 plus - would be a daunting task, but it would never seriously be questioned whether we would do it, only how it was to be done. We would have some huge successes. grant proposals, Thursday bake sales and Adopt-an-Explorer would bring in more than $9,000. And we would have smaller successes: selling hot dogs and frozen cans of Coke in a November snowstorm outside Revy will net us $1.25.

Explorations would come to test us. Of course it would test us physically - that is always a given in these experiences for some reason. But it would also come to test us mentally, emotionally, socially and, at times, spiritually.

We would have to organize gear, learn skills in map reading and emergency first aid as well as become competent in the techniques of backcountry skiing and sea kayaking. We would plan menus, dry food, pack food, get physically fit, research area history, geography, and geology, environmental issues, political issues, social issues, arrange logistical support, plan routes, sew clothes, read tide charts, and so on.

In the midst of this we would have to learn and re-learn what it takes to create a rewarding, educational experience within a consensus-based social structure, a culture of our own making. We would try to make decisions that were acceptable to all in a process that eats time and in which frustration and satisfaction can become synonymous. We would have to develop an ethic of caring that seeks a balance between our personal goals and group needs. We would find virtually every aspect of every task infused with the meanings and implications of our adopted social process.

We would come to learn of maps and getting lost - and getting found again. Of cold: cold feet, cold hands, cold face, cold legs, cold, cold arms, cold head... numb mind. Of the attraction between ice and hair, and between cold ski poles and wet tongues. But partly from these things we will learn of the beauty and stillness of a frozen world, and would come to a truer understanding of the value of things hot and things chocolate. We will glimpse proud cultures of the west coast, peering through the ancientness as though through untold fathoms of clear, but constantly shifting waters. We will find ourselves trying to piece together the meaning of the story of a people and a land - just as others will try to feel the meaning of our experience when we tell it ages hence.

We would come to learn of cooperation and conflict - among, between, and in us. We would come to learn of death, of sudden loss, of grief, and of the crawling pace of healing. We would also discover the power of shared laughter and senseless, but profound joy. We would come to know the comfort and serenity of special places and special people, human and otherwise.

But it is still 1994 and all that is yet to come. There are more immediate concerns. Where will we go? What kind of trip will it be? I know these people I am to share my dreams with, but do not know them. And the wisdom of lived time has not yet decided to reveal to me that the greatest exploration I will accomplish in the next two years will be of myself.

Appendix B

Urban Solo

THE 1995 EXPLORATIONS URBAN SOLO EXTRAVAGANZA

Welcome to a night of difference!! Your area of "residence" for the evening is listed on the back of the sheet. The other groups (and their boundaries) are also listed for you.

Your mission is to spend the night in your area and then make it back to the university on the LRT by 6:45 a.m. The first LRT on Sunday morning leaves the Churchill Station at 5:42 a.m. with trains leaving approximately every 15 minutes after that. All three of you must ride together. If your group is unable to catch the LRT, call me at **488-2728** between 6:00 and 6:15 a.m. to arrange a pick-up. From the University Station, it's a short walk to my house (11579 80 Ave) where breakfast will be waiting. Coffee, tea, juice, fruit, pancakes - sound OK?

Some suggestions and resource info:

- Make sure you have at least one whistle for each group before you split up for the night

- Breaking the law is not advisable (including riding the LRT without a ticket).

- Remaining sober, no matter how much money you are able to panhandle, is advisable.

- If you run into the beat officers, stop and introduce yourselves to them. They are supposed to know you are out there.

- If you run into trouble and need to leave your area, leave it first and then when you feel comfortable, call to let me know what you have done. The number you can reach me at is **488-2728**. You can also use the other groups as resources IF YOU NEED THEM.

- If you really need to be somewhere safe, the main police station is at 9620 103A Ave. No money is required to call 911.

- The beat officers will be in Churchill Square between 6 and 8 p.m.

- There might be a soup bus in the evening at 96 St. and 103A Ave. (it operates in the summer, but might not in the fall and winter).

- Take a tour of your area early on so that you can get to know what's there for you later on (e.g.'s, phone booths, shelters, etc.)

**** Good luck - Have yourselves an experience. See you in the morning for breakfast!!**

Appendix C

Sample Consent Form

Consent Form

Project Title:	Exploring Sense of Place
Researcher:	Brent Cuthbertson (403) 436-1990
Faculty Advisor:	Dr. David Whitson (403) 492-2004

Project Description:

> The purpose of the study is to gain insight into the development of a conscious sense of place in future outdoor educators. The researcher will attempt to accomplish this through detailed observations and seeking personal interviews with the students from the Explorations program at the University of Alberta.

The undersigned should be aware that the identity of the participant/interviewee will be kept confidential, with the researcher named above being the only person having access to tapes, transcripts, or notes of the interviews and field notes. Any quotations from the interviewee used in the researcher's analysis/reports will also be kept confidential. The undersigned should also be aware that the participant/interviewee may decline to participate in, or withdraw from, the interview or any other part of the project AT ANY TIME without consequences.

The formal interview process will involve a time commitment outside of the regular requirements of the Explorations program of approximately 3 to 4 hours during the course of the academic year 1995/1996. The participant/interviewee, having read the above and having received a copy of this form, hereby consents to participate in the research project named and described above.

Date:______________________________

Participant______________________________

Researcher______________________________

Appendix D

Research Agenda

Pre-interview agenda

Establish a base level understanding of participants' relationship with nature through:

1) pursuing stories of their initial and ongoing contacts with the natural world;
2) pursuing conceptual understandings of terms such as wilderness, place and home;
3) exploring personal goals and passions with regard to experiences in nature;
4) exploring participants' connection of "things cultural" and "things natural;" and
5) exlporing personal positions with regard to current environmental problems.

Post-interview agenda

1) provide a debriefing of the Explorations experience on an individual level;
2) explore incidents of particular significance in personal learning;
3) explore gaps in the process and content of the participants' Explorations experience;
4) follow up on individual issues raised during pre-interviews;
5) examine changes in how participants relate to the places visited and travelled through; and
6) pursue participants' understandings of how and why those changes might have occurred.

Appendix E

Participant Profiles

The following series of participant profiles is the result of a combination of data from several sources. As a verification of their preparedness, and for final trip approval from university administration, the students made a presentation to selected members of the Physical Education and Recreation Faculty as well as administration officers charged with assessing risk factors in university programs. The presentation included some information about each individual in Explorations. Additionally, self-reported statements during group meetings, interview data and my own observations about their involvement in planning supply the balance of the information.

Gary

Gary was one of the least involved members in the planning phase of Explorations. Combined with his reduced participation on the two trips, this may have had some bearing on Gary's self-reported uncertainty as to what role he played in the group. He enjoyed being outdoors a great deal and was perhaps the most "individual" member of Explorations. Gary saw the trips as pure expedition, and his reasoning for dropping out at the half-way point on the ski trip was that his illness had the potential to slow the rest of the group down. According to Gary, anyone who could not keep up on an expedition should be left behind. The reasons Gary gave for not participating fully on the sea kayaking trip centred around job responsibilities. Gary's goals for Explorations were never really articulated beyond wanting to get out and enjoy the trips.

Anne

Anne's passion for living actively in the outdoors started with family camping, hiking and biking trips. Working as a camp counsellor for four years at a residential camp as well as with many children's programs for the past five years, her love for the outdoors and teaching in the outdoors has grown. Anne came to the U of A because of the opportunity to graduate as a Recreation administration student with Explorations as part of her individual course pattern. According to Anne, her undergraduate university education has not only provided her with an excellent background on leisure, tourism, and world issues, but has given her a unique opportunity in experiential education. Anne saw the trips as challenging the camping and group skills she acquired throughout her life as well as building on her skiing and paddling experiences.

Anne was reportedly intimidated in first joining the group, and being Kathlene's roommate, she connected a good deal of her sense of belonging initially with Kathlene. However, once Anne found a role that could contribute to the group's success, she felt much more comfortable and she also became a high profile group member. Anne, along with Kathlene, took on a large part of the fund-raising efforts through grant writing. She was also central in the planning of the sea kayaking trip expressed only one, overarching goal for her experience in Explorations. Anne felt that life had become too serious and that she wanted to recapture the carefree attitude of childhood again.

Mary

Besides having gained experience and knowledge through Explorations, Mary has had previous experience in the outdoor field. Training she received includes life-guarding certification, canoe instructor certification, Spring Camp at the U of A, recreational experiences and first aid background. Mary has worked in residential camps for the past six summers prior to Explorations, learning about group skills, camping skills and her own personal growth as a leader and group member. Mary's goals were mostly group oriented, citing friendship and learning from others as her goals for the program.

Mary was extremely concerned about the way people interact and communicate. Besides contributing to the group by assisting others in their tasks, Mary saw herself as the member who focused on group skills and communication. Mary stated during one group meeting that, as a person, she knew what it was like to be the one left out and that she did not want anyone to feel that way. Mary may have been conflicted often because while she had experienced an unusual amount of self-doubt (an area that she expressed a desire to improve), she also sought to make sure that those who presented a rather strong view on some issues were not left unchallenged by another perspective. Mary was one of the least physically skilled members and she often doubted her own level of knowledge. However, while this may have made her quite tentative in leading on trail, not once did she give up in trying to improve or master a skill.

Paula

As Paula stated before we left, "Wilderness expeditions are the love of my life." Her summers are generally filled with leading canoe and kayak trips for residential camps. Before leaving on the trips, Paula was interested in living each day on trail to its fullest and feeling a physical connection to nature. She saw life in the city as somewhat more mundane than life on trail and mentioned that her journal entries were more "inspired" when she was out in nature. While Paula was comfortable in flatwater canoeing and kayaking as well as having some experience in whitewater, she was not very practiced in skiing or ski touring.

Paula was one who was intensely interested in what she could learn from other people and from her own experiences. She spent a good deal of time reflecting on both trips and the lessons she learned from them. Paula was also the type who made a conscious effort to look at the positive side of situations and events, if only to say that she gained some wisdom. She was always interested in learning how to handle or lead on trail and took advantage of opportunities that presented themselves. While her winter backcountry skills were limited, she was much more comfortable in the warm weather environment of the sea kayak trip. Paula was unsure of her role within the group, but she tended to provide humour, and emotional support for others. Paula did not miss a fund raising event and contributed significantly to the preparation of food for both trips.

Damian

Paddling and skiing have been an important part of Damian's life for the past few years prior to Explorations. Damian was perhaps the most accomplished skier in the group, having downhill skied since he was a child. More recently, he has begun to learn telemark skiing techniques and has become adept rather quickly. Virtually all of his experience in this regard has been at resort areas, and like the rest of the Explorations member, his backcountry skiing has been limited. Damian was introduced to canoeing and kayaking during his first year of university and he has been pursuing these activities with a passion since. By his third and fourth year at the University of Alberta, Damian had managed to get work from the Campus Outdoor Centre (the outdoor resource room at the U of A) as a climbing and kayak instructor. Damian's often stated personal goal for Explorations was that "we travel for an extended period of time."

Damian was extremely fit and came to outdoor activities from a background in track and field. He was liked by all other Explorations members and possessed an outgoing, friendly and talkative personality. Damian became known for his ability to tell stories of his adventures with other friends and, along with Paula, provided much of the humour in everyday life on trail. He tended to have a self-deprecating manner that was disarming. While Damian probably had the most physical talent in skiing and was quite adept at kayaking, his ability was not the focus of his interaction with others. On another level, Damian was a physical risk-taker who was not afraid to be the first down a ski slope or to lead a channel crossing in kayaking.

Mel

According to Mel, her passion in life is to paddle. Over the years, she has come to develop a deep love and respect for travel in nature through canoe tripping. For Mel, there is a brutal aspect to the power of nature, but she feels that this is one of the things that makes the earth the greatest teacher of life lessons. In her mind, there is no better place to learn than outdoors on an extended wilderness trip. Mel feels that in the outdoors, the consequences of our actions are very direct, therefore tended to plan very carefully and thoroughly. Similarly to Paula, Mel has a good deal of summer canoe tripping experience, feeling comfortable in water environments, but lacked significant backcountry skiing experience.

Mel was involved in as much of the planning as any one person could possibly be. She was responsible for researching the cultural history of the ski trip and spent a considerable time planning and researching the ski trip route. She was involved in every fund raising effort and helped others with their tasks. At times, Mel felt somewhat overwhelmed with the enormity of the responsibility she had undertaken, but this may have been a function of her willingness to take on more than her share of the work in planning. Mel's goals for Explorations were both skills based and oriented to personal growth. In the initial brainstorming sessions, Mel wanted to gain some certification through the Explorations process and carry out as adventurous an expedition as was possible. She introduced as a possibility, for example, the trip of climbing Denali as part of a National Outdoor Leadership Course. Mel was perhaps one of the more social individuals in the group when it came to meeting or talking with people outside the group and she provided much of the leadership in processing experiences. Both having and understanding adventure were central to Mel's goals for Explorations.

Will

The areas of ski touring and sea kayaking were relatively new to Will, but the skills involved in general backcountry travel were not. Will felt comfortable with my skills as a paddler and cross-country skier, but these specific activity types were not his area of expertise. Will was quite confident as a backpacker and climber, and he picked up physical skills quite readily.

In expressing an early interest in the finances of the group, Will was acclaimed as the financial officer of Explorations '96, a role he accepted and performed with diligence. He was strong-willed, independent in his thinking and not afraid to express himself, which sometimes put him at odds with the majority of the group. During the final stages of planning and on the ski trip, some social tensions built between Will and others in the group, which may have had an effect on his change of personal direction and goals in Explorations. Will was one of the members who was concerned that people make a serious commitment to the trips and the work needed to accomplish them. But after the ski trip, Will cited job responsibilities for cutting short his participation on the sea kayak trip. While he may have lost some enthusiasm after the ski trip, Will was quite involved during the initial stages, and helped plan and run a few of the fund-raising campaigns.

Bailey

In terms of skill level, Bailey probably had the most amount of kayaking experience in the group. He was more comfortable in the water environment than any other member and readily played in waves on the ocean that caused concern for some others. Bailey came from a background of life guarding (he worked for the university pool as one of the part-time guards) and road cycling races. In fact, he won a provincial championship in cycling in 1994. In situations that he knew less well, such as backcountry skiing, Bailey concerned himself with safety protocols and watching for avalanche potential along the route. He often stayed toward the back of the group in skiing in order to offer help for others.

His own goals were to have a safe and successful ski trip (which he defined as reaching Banff) and to spend as much time as possible sea kayaking. From the outset, Bailey made it clear that he would make himself available to be gone on trip for as long as anyone else might be willing.

Sarah

Sarah billed herself as the designated driver for the group. She was very involved in planning and then providing support logistics for the group's activities. At one point, Sarah tried to encourage others to call her by the nickname "Otto" after the bus driver in a television cartoon series. While Sarah had some training in industrial first aid, she was fairly inexperienced in both sea kayaking and backcountry skiing.

Sarah saw herself as the group caretaker in some ways, providing a sharp wit, doughnuts, and occasionally beer in group meetings. She also tended to see herself as more connected to animals than people, thus indicating a desire to see as much wildlife as possible on the trips. Ultimately, Sarah was too affected by Kathlene's death to participate to any significant degree in either of the trips, but she was quite involved in the drying of food and other prepatory tasks prior to the trips. Sarah also did not lose touch with the group during the trip phase, choosing instead to take on a support and logistics role.

Cynthia

Cynthia dropped out of Explorations between the time we met at Two O'Clock Creek (the half-way point of the ski trip) and the time we returned from the ski trip. She was unable to participate on the ski trip because of a knee operation and spent that time back in Edmonton. Cynthia made the decision to leave Explorations without consulting the program's advisor (Dr. Scott) and simply chose and simply chose to move on. Prior to her decision, she was a regularly contributing member in fund raising events, group meetings and planning activities. Her own goals for Explorations were to work on her self-confidence and "not to blow things off." Cynthia's background in the outdoor field was largely supplied by family camping and the experiences she had through her undergraduate courses in outdoor education.

Kathlene

No one in Explorations '96 would be able to claim to have more energy than Kathlene. At times in the group meetings, Kathlene would become so excited by an idea or a proposed plan that she would physically jump up and down in her chair. Her main goal in Explorations was to see each of us gain a very deep respect for all the others in the group. She was interested in honest communication and attempted to live up to this ideal, wanting to have the opportunity to tell others what bothered her and wanting others to have the same chance with her.

Kathlene was intensely committed to Explorations and the resultant responsibilities (e.g., fund raising), showing up for *every* event and chastising others for being inconsistent. At one group meeting, Kathlene stated that she was not quite sure what her role was except to get excited about everything.